

dance composition

Jacqueline M. Smith-Autard

Sixth Edition



**A practical guide to
creative success in
dance making**

methuen | drama

Dance Composition

Jacqueline Smith-Autard

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The accompanying DVD

The DVD can be played on a DVD player through a modern LCD TV and on any desktop or laptop computer with a DVD program. If the DVD is to be used to support practical teaching of composition and performance in large groups, the playback should be projected onto a large screen in the dance studio.

The DVD starts with the Introduction. This explains how the DVD relates to the book. Please view this on the first occasion. On subsequent occasions the Introduction can be bypassed by clicking on the player's control button titled Menu. This action takes you to the Main Menu on the DVD.

In the Main Menu there are three choices: Choreographic Outcomes Demo – to provide visual demonstration of the detailed description of a CD-ROM resource pack in Section 4, pp. 148–156; Vocalise Demo – to provide visual demonstration of the detailed description of a DVD-ROM resource pack in Section 5; pp. 188–208 and Practical Assignments.

A click on the latter button presents further two choices – *Vocalise* – a solo employed in both Sections 4 and 5 as a source for students' own composition and performance work and Lisa's Duo which produces further choices so that the whole duo and its six separate sections can be viewed and used as sources for duo composition assignments detailed in Section 4.

Whilst using the DVD you should employ all the facilities provided on your player – slow motion, pause, return, fast forward and backward, step forward and backward and the bookmark option if you have it (see the footnote on p. 157).

Preface

In the arts, to compose is to create – to make something which, for each particular artist, has not existed before. Artists who attain the highest peaks of perfection in composition – dance: the choreographer, music: the composer, art: the painter or sculptor, drama: the playwright, literature: the poet or novelist – are inspired people of imagination and vision. The few who reach these heights of artistry are those with outstanding gifts and skills, and who, through many years of diligent and perceptive study, have mastered their craft so completely that they have no need to analyse the ‘rules’ when they become inspired to create something which, in its finished form, is unique.

If we are realistic and honest with ourselves, the majority of us know that our talent, in the particular art in which we have chosen to be involved, may have many limitations compared with those who are truly great. This is not to suggest that we under-estimate ourselves, but that self-assessment of our own ability is very important as it guards us from becoming pretentious in attempting what is beyond our skill.

The challenge to those who teach an art is to encourage and guide students towards fulfilling their potential. During the process, the teacher and the taught may derive encouragement and inspiration from each other as well as from those who have been recognised as especially talented.

Although the term choreography is commonly used to describe the activity of composing dances, the title of this book has been retained as *Dance Composition* because it focuses almost exclusively on the content and form of dances rather than on all aspects of choreography including themes, music or sound, design and lighting. Here dance composition is considered as a craft from the point of view of students and young teachers who are faced with the task of composing dances, and encouraging others to do the same. Many find difficulty in this creative aspect of the art of dance, often through lack of confidence due to insufficient knowledge of the guidelines. But what are the guidelines or ‘rules’ which become so absorbed and reflected in the works of those who have mastered the craft of their art? This book attempts to answer this question. The

5th edition also began to consider the personal, creative, intuitive input into compositions, perhaps providing a fuller picture for student composers. This 6th edition adds a consideration of the ways in which performance of dances can enhance knowledge and understanding of composition. The most distinctive feature of this new edition is the inclusion of a DVD to provide examples of composition and performance from which, through related practical assignments, students can enrich their own dance making and performing.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Jim Schofield, my partner in Bedford Interactive Research, and to Michael Schofield who works for us and made the DVD accompanying this book, both of whose innovative and inspiring ideas have advanced and enhanced the teaching of dance composition through the use of multimedia. Section 4, *Resource-based teaching/learning – dance composition*, and Section 5, *Resource-based teaching/learning – dance performance* reflect the new and exciting possibilities offered through the use of technology – exposing as they do, a whole range of practical assignments derived from the study of a professionally choreographed dance work. Bedford Interactive's work to create CD-ROM and DVD-ROM resource packs has led to fresh approaches in the use of new technology resources in teaching/learning dance composition and performance, as presented in the above named sections.

Also for their kind permission to use the photographs of *Wild Child*, I thank Ludus Dance and Tara Martin, photographer. Thanks also go to the dancers featured in these photographs – Jason Bradley, Penny Collinson, Darryl Shepherd and Ruth Spencer. Further photographs, taken by Ryan Smith, feature Lisa Spackman, Christine Francis, Kevin Wright and Kate Oliver. Many thanks to these artists for the time and energy spent on this exercise.

My thanks also go to Carly Annable, a former dance student of the University of Leeds Bretton Hall Campus, for the insight into her choreographic process which is discussed in Section 3. Part-funded by Palatine, and within the Bretton Hall Centre for Research in Dance, this work was recorded and analysed for a pilot research that led to a CD-ROM demo disc authored by Bedford Interactive.

Introduction

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Dancing and composing dances

There is a vast difference between dancing and composing dances. Dancing can be enjoyed for the pleasure of moving with skilled accuracy, of moving with others and for the release of feeling. But to compose a dance is to create a work of art. 'It involves putting your imagination to work to make something new, to come up with new solutions to problems' (Robinson, 2009: 67). However, just to create new movement ideas is not enough since, according to Redfern (1973) an early initiator of change in dance education, an understanding of dance as an art form begins:

... when concern is not simply with delight in bodily movement but with a formulated whole, a structured 'something' so that the relationship and coherence of the constituent parts becomes of increasing interest and importance. (p. 103)

Over the past four decades shifts in dance in education have been rapid and exciting, and Redfern's recommendation for an emphasis on creating dances has been fulfilled. We have seen a move away from, or rather a refocusing of, the Laban model, which emphasised the experiential, child-centred process of dancing as a means of developing personal qualities, towards a theatre art model with an emphasis on the dance product. However, the latter, in its professional form, proved too exacting for all but the few who could achieve technical perfection and polished performance. What we have now is what I like to call a 'midway' model – one that incorporates aspects of both the educational/process/Laban model and the professional/product/theatre model and also acknowledges the distinctive role that dance in education should have in a balanced curriculum.

Dance is a broad concept for there are many forms performed for various reasons in many different contexts. To experience the whole range of dance would

take up much curriculum time so what we seem to have arrived at, as a consensus approach for dance in education in the new millennium, is dance as an art model which extends across, and draws from, a range of dance contexts – dance in the theatre, dance in the community and dance derived from specific cultural settings (eg, South Asian classical dance, social dance, urban or street dance).

Dance as art

The ‘midway’ model amalgamates some elements of the educational and professional models yet introduces new aspects too. Its distinctiveness lies in the concept of *dance as art education* contributing towards aesthetic education. Pupils concentrate on coming to know dance as art through composing, performing and appreciating dances. This three stranded approach has become the central organising principle of dance education today. There is a balance between creating, performing and viewing dances and an overall desire that pupils come to appreciate dances as art works, their own and those produced professionally in theatrical or performance settings.

The first edition of this book published in 1976 provided an important lead in developing and promoting this three stranded dance as art model for education. Since then, others have reiterated justifications for this conceptual basis for dance in education. In the UK, the 1980s saw publications by Adshead (1981), Haynes in Abbs (1987), Lowden (1989) and the 1990s saw quite a proliferation of guidelines for dance in schools but mostly for the primary sector – viz. Harlow and Rolfe (1992), Evans and Powell (1994), Allen and Coley KS2 (1995), Davies and Sabin (1995), and Smith-Autard (1995). All these primary and the following secondary focused books (Harrison and Auty (1991), Allen and Coley KS3 (1995), and Killingbeck (1995)) reinforce the dance as art model. Added to this list, my second book, *The Art of Dance in Education* (1994), now in its second edition (2002), spells out in detail the conceptual bases and how the three processes of performing, composing and appreciating may be taught across the sectors – primary, secondary and higher education. Today there is evidence of this model in dance syllabuses for schools, colleges and universities in most of the western world. In England and Wales, the National Curriculum¹ for pupils aged 5–16 and the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination syllabus² for students

of 16+ and the Advanced level examination syllabus³ for students of 17+, all feature the dance as art model and assess students in composing, performing and appreciating dances.

Although the main focus is still on the processes and practices of composing dances, this sixth edition of the book makes a significant contribution to the ways in which composition experiences can be integrated with performing and appreciating experiences within a resource-based teaching and learning environment supported by the use of technology.

The nature of composition

Referring to Redfern's statement above, composing involves moulding together compatible elements which, by their relationship and fusion, form an identifiable 'something'.

The material elements

To effect this moulding successfully, the composer must be fully aware of the nature of the elements so that they may best judge how to select, refine and combine them. Think of the knowledge that goes into the making of an aircraft, a piece of furniture, a building. Maybe this knowledge is shared among many people, each responsible for a small part of the composition, but considered collectively, the nature of the elements are fully understood before such things can be produced. Without some previous concept or image it takes a great deal of trial and error to fashion anything with elements that are completely foreign.

Methods of construction

The material elements of the composition need to be experienced and understood and, also, the processes or methods of fashioning or combining these various elements have to be learned and practised. A composer or musician

¹ See the content of Dance Activities Units on <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/> – the non-statutory guidelines to help teachers deliver the statutory curriculum for dance.

² See the 2010 specification on <http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/pdf/AQA-4230-W-SP-10.PDF>

³ See the 2010 specification on <http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/pdf/AQA-2230-W-SP-10.PDF>

cannot write notes ad hoc, they must have a relationship to each other to create melody. There are rules of construction which help the composer decide how to juxtapose sounds, achieve harmony or discord, change key, and vary phrase length and intensity to produce mood or expression in the music. The composer also has to adhere to disciplines of rhythm, consider the effects of tempo and understand how to structure and stylise the piece. The dance composer has also to consider such matters. There are 'rules' or guidelines for construction which need to be part of the composer's awareness when making dances.

It is therefore clear that composition of a successful dance pre-supposes that the composer has knowledge of:

- a. the material elements of a dance
- b. methods of construction which give form to a dance
- c. an understanding of the style within which the composer is working.

A student who has only just been introduced to the art of making dances will not be expected to produce a work of art with the same degree of sophistication as a student who has two or three years' training. Through experience and continual practice, the composer gradually acquires knowledge of movement material and methods of constructing with the material. The degree of this knowledge affects the resulting level of sophistication in the dance creations.

The nature of dance composition

From the discussion so far, it is clear that a dance composition should be regarded as a work of art. The question as to what constitutes a work of art is far from simple to answer but there is a consistency in the notion that art promotes aesthetic experience. This leads, of course, to consideration of meaning of the word aesthetic.

For the purposes of this book, the term aesthetic will be used in the sense suggested by Reid (2008):

We have an aesthetic situation wherever we apprehend and in some sense enjoy meaning immediately embodied in something; in some way unified and integrated: feeling, hearing, touching, imagining. When we apprehend – perceive, and imagine things

and enjoy them for their own sakes – for their form – the forms seem to be meaningful to us, and this is an aesthetic situation. What we thus apprehend as meaningful is meaningful not in the sense that the perceived forms point to something else, their meaning, as ordinary words or other symbols do: the forms are in themselves delightful and significant – a poem, a picture, a dance, a shell on the sea shore. This then is the aesthetic, which art forms share with objects and movements which are not in themselves art at all. . . . The arts are concerned with the aesthetic but the aesthetic is much wider than the arts. (pp. 295–6)

This would suggest that expression of emotion is not necessarily art. To dance, release emotions and express oneself may well be an aesthetic experience, not only for the performer enjoying the movement for its own sake, but also for the onlooker. The sheer beauty of physical movement is aesthetically appreciated in many fields – athletics, sport, gymnastics, swimming, but this is not art.

A work of art is the expression or embodiment of something formed from diverse but compatible elements as a whole entity to be enjoyed aesthetically. It has to be created with the composer's intention to say something, to communicate an idea or emotion. In dance this may be about people, happenings, moods or even about movement itself. The dance composition as an entity can only be a portrayal of emotions or ideas. Although sincerity of interpretation is essential to be convincing, the dancer does not actually 'feel' what the dance reflects. Rather, the carefully selected movement content is an abstraction from actual feeling or happenings to suggest meanings that are significant to the dance idea.

How the composition is arranged or shaped produces the form of the whole. The word form is used in all arts to describe the shape and structure of each work of art. The idea or emotion which is to be communicated becomes embodied in the form. The form is the aspect which is aesthetically evaluated by the onlooker who does not see every element but gains an impression of the whole. This is particularly relevant to the temporal arts, such as music and dance.

This statement has been reinforced by Martin (1933) in the much used and still relevant quotation that follows.

Form . . . may, indeed, be defined as the result of unifying diverse elements whereby they achieve collectively an aesthetic vitality which except by this association they would not possess. The whole thus becomes greater than the sum of its parts. The unifying process by which form is attained is known as composition. (p. 35)

Teaching dance composition

Teachers in art education, generally, are concerned that students eventually move from the experimental 'play' stage to a construction stage in which they make things using the various components of the art form. As will be discussed later, students may well learn methods of combining elements to create whole dances from ready-made dance compositions. Even when the student is attempting to replicate an art work, emphasis of thought will be directed towards the 'rules' of construction.

In dance, too, we must go beyond the sheer activity of dancing and devote time to the art of making dances. If students are to experience dance as an art form, it is imperative that the dance teacher includes a consideration of dance composition in the work-scheme. Then, in addition to the experiential benefits of dancing, pupils may be guided into the realms of art and develop artistic talents and aesthetic awareness.

This view suggests that a reasonable assumption may be made on the following lines:

- a. Knowledge of dance as an art form can only be acquired through experiencing dances, composing, performing and viewing them.
- b. The basis for success in composition depends upon:
 - the artistry and intuitive inspiration of the individual
 - a wide vocabulary of movement as a means of expression
 - knowledge of how to create the shape and structure of a dance

For the teacher of dance composition this assumption presented a difficulty when this book was first published. The trend of thought seemed to indicate that, apart from knowledge of movement vocabulary and a cursory knowledge of form,

dance composition merely required intuitive artistic insight which is immeasurable and intangible. Although partly a view inherited from the era which promoted dance in education as free expression, there were those who suggested that, because it is so subjective, it is not to be analysed and it, therefore, cannot be taught. For this reason, perhaps, there was a dearth of literature on the subject. There were many books on the material content of dances but few offering ideas on how this content may be shaped and structured.

Things have moved on considerably since then and now syllabuses in schools, colleges and universities require that students study dance composition and demonstrate their understanding of how to create symbolic content within formed dances that portray meaning above and beyond the sum of their parts. For example, in the UK based Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) GCE Dance Specification for AS exams 2009 onwards and A2 exams 2010 onwards, knowledge and understanding of dance composition is examined through candidates composing solo and group dances and through writing answers to questions requiring analysis and appreciation of professional dance works.

Over the past thirty three years, this book has played a part in the promotion of learning which develops such knowledge and understanding of dance composition, and it continues to be in demand so discussion of the essential construction elements of dances remains unchanged.

Section 1 offers a brief discussion of the dance composer's movement content. It pre-supposes that the reader already has, or will easily acquire from the text, a knowledge of the terminology and concepts offered by Rudolf Laban because, although the philosophy underlying his approach to dance in education may no longer be considered valid, his analysis of movement elements as a basic tool for dance composition is unsurpassed. The concepts identified in his analysis are fundamental because Laban categorised the total range of human movement into easily recognisable and descriptive frames of reference.

Section 2, *Methods of construction 1*, outlines the initial processes in dance composition including improvisation. However, this is merely an introduction. A fuller discussion of improvisation appears in *Methods of construction 7* – placed later in the book as a reminder that experimentation through improvisation should take place throughout the process of composing a dance. It appears as a reminder because the problem of how to achieve form in dance composition is

the emphasised and central concern of the book and is discussed fully in earlier chapters – *Methods of construction 2–6*.

It should be made clear, however, that the book focuses almost exclusively on traditional, formal approaches in dance composition because it is considered that artistic ‘rules’, established through generations of practice, need first to be learned and applied in many different contexts before they can be broken, changed or ignored. These traditional principles of form are subjected to scrutiny in most of Section 2.

In the 3rd edition, Section 2 also contained an additional chapter, *Methods of construction 8*, to identify *alternative and experimental approaches* emerging from the work of late twentieth century practitioners. This was included, and is retained unaltered in this edition, because such work challenges and could, perhaps, change and replace the current mainstream approaches. It is considered important, therefore, that dance students study a range of new ideas and processes as an antithesis to established practice. Moreover, although much can be learned from viewing and reading about them, practical engagement with some of the alternative approaches is essential if the students are fully to understand, adopt and adapt such procedures for their own compositions. *Methods of construction 8* provides a summary of some of the important characteristics of alternative approaches in professional dance today, and indicates ways in which students might experiment to move away from the more traditional, formal and established approaches.

Developments in the teaching of dance as an art form clearly demonstrate that the original content of this book outlined above remains relevant as a starting point for teachers and students of dance, whether undertaking professional training, teacher training, BA degree courses, or school-based dance examination courses. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that this book is not a prescribed course for the teaching of dance composition. (No one book can adequately provide all the ingredients necessary for the production of dance art works.) It does, however, disclose the important concepts and principles, and offers some means of communicating them to learners. The students’ imaginative use of the concepts and principles presented here should be promoted through the teacher’s carefully designed programme in which composing, performing and appreciating dances are experienced in a variety of contexts.

In considering how meaningful and creative dance composition results from

a complex mix of objective learning (derived from study contained in Section 2) and subjective (intuitive) feeling entering into the process, a section on the creative process in dance composition appeared in the 5th edition. Starting with a general discussion on the latter, a detailed description of one student's composition process from inspiration to performance aimed to initiate ideas for both teachers and students. This forms Section 3 in this edition – *The creative process in dance composition*.

In terms of resources to support teaching and learning in dance composition, a good deal more material has been produced during the past decade. As well as using books such as this, teachers can enrich dance composition for their students from resources such as live performances, videos/DVDs and films of professional choreography, and/or practical workshops in choreography offered by dance artists resident in schools, colleges or local arts centres. Also, notated scores provide a means of learning more about dance composition through reconstruction and performance of excerpts from well-known dance works. All such resources are extremely valuable in teaching dance composition. Experience and knowledge gained from analysis and appreciation of professionally choreographed dance works, placed appropriately to supplement the teacher's own input, can effectively motivate, promote and boost students' artistic learning.

There is little doubt that video resources of dance works now on DVD have become essential in the teaching of dance appreciation. There are also increasing signs of an emerging pedagogy for the use of such resources in teaching/learning of composition. However, linear video that has not been especially shot for teaching/learning purposes is not an entirely suitable format in that there is the constant need to rewind and search for the required footage. Moreover, there are few videos/DVDs with accompanying teaching materials that provide detailed study of choreographers' works, together with use of them as inspirational starting points for the students' own work.

Now that we are into the second millennium, as a profession we must surely advance in the use of technology for teaching/learning in dance. Resources recorded on digital video and delivered on CD or DVD-ROM formats seem to be the present direction to take. Section 4 of this book determines some of the ways in which this more advanced technology can benefit teaching/learning of dance composition.

The 4th edition, introduced the concept of resource-based teaching/learning in dance composition and the use of new technologies. In the 5th edition this pedagogy was described in detail by means of reference to use of *Wild Child – an interactive CD-ROM resource pack for dance education*, published by Bedford Interactive Productions in conjunction with the Ludus Dance Company in 1999/2001.⁴ In this edition, however, Section 4 – *Resource-based teaching/learning – dance composition* focuses on a newer title – *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition*⁵ – an interactive digital resource that contains a CD-ROM, the *Creative Practice Guidebook*, and this text book. The pack aims to demonstrate the concepts and principles of form discussed in Section 2, ie, aspects of form – motifs, developments, variations, contrasts, floor and air patterns, orchestration of dancers in time and space – which are studied and explored by the students in appreciation and practical composition tasks derived from the Guidebook's worksheets. Section 4 of this edition not only describes *Choreographic Outcomes* as a teaching/learning resource, it offers practical assignments for students, referring to the DVD accompanying this book.

This DVD is an important addition to this edition. Some of the video content of this disc has been taken from the CD-ROM of the pack described above. It therefore acts as both a demo for the full pack and as a visual representation and inspirational starting points to guide students in practical dance composing assignments to explore some of the concepts presented in this book. While it is recommended that teachers purchase the full interactive CD-ROM resource pack to use in dance composition classes, students who have purchased this book will benefit from seeing for themselves the concepts presented in this book illustrated on the DVD. Although this is non-interactive, as it has been specially made for this book, a menu provides simple navigation from illustration to illustration with clear indicators in the text of the book as to which illustration should be viewed to understand further the aspect of dance composition described.

Also new to this edition, Section 5 – *Resource-based teaching/learning – dance performance* focuses on the ways in which performance of dances – the

⁴*Wild Child* was published in CD-i format in 1999 and later re-written in CD-ROM format in 2001. It is still available for use with PCs and contains a huge amount of material for pupils aged 7 upwards to enhance learning in dance performance, composition and appreciation.

⁵*Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition* was created and published by Bedford Interactive Productions (2005) specifically to illustrate concepts relating to form presented in this book.

students' own, their teacher's or repertoire from choreographed works of professionals – can vastly enhance and deepen the knowledge and understanding of dance composition. However, in my view, achieving excellence in the performance of dances through 'getting inside' and gaining ownership of them also requires use of a resource-based teaching and learning methodology. Rather than a traditional approach – students copying to learn dances – this section outlines how use of new technologies as resources can provide student-directed learning activities to improve their own performances of dances. Section 5 demonstrates the benefits of this methodology through description of a new DVD-ROM resource pack also produced by Bedford Interactive Productions, *Vocalise – improving dance performance* (2008). So that teachers and students can immediately apply this methodology to improving the performance of their own dances, practical assignments with reference to this DVD-ROM are provided in Section 5. Again, the DVD accompanying this book contains a demonstration of the full interactive resource pack — *Vocalise – improving dance performance* as well as specially selected excerpts for use in the practical assignments found in Sections 4 and 5.

Section 6, *Standing back from the process – evaluations* returns first to the composer's freedom – the imaginative, intuitive input into the process – and then focuses on evaluations of dance compositions. The section includes an important summarising diagram – *The process of composition in dance* – which draws together all the aspects of learning covered in this book, ie, knowledge of movement material, knowledge of methods of construction, acquaintance knowledge of dance in the aesthetic realm and the role of imagination and intuition in dance composition.

Concluding remarks refer to the richness of experience that the merge between theory presented in this book and the practice that takes place in the dance studio produces for students of dance composition.

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Section 1

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The material content

Movement and meaning

The basic language of movement

The word language is used here as an analogy only. It is not meant to suggest that the language of movement can replace or be the same as language in a vocally communicative context. It is common knowledge that communication can take place through movement. How it communicates is the dance composer's area of study. Many verbal expressions describe moods or thoughts in terms of movement:

jumped for joy	shrank back in fear
rushed into the room	bent in pain
threw up his hands in horror	stamped in anger
didn't know which way to turn	shook with excitement

It is this natural movement language which forms the dance composer's vocabulary.

A child's movement is very expressive of their feelings. A mother seldom has to ask how her child feels as she gets to know the symptomatic movement patterns. In our culture, it is expected that these are modified as we grow older so that, eventually, it is hard to tell what the typical British 'stiff upper lip' citizen might be feeling. In other cultures, restraint is not so marked, although it is generally accepted that one is not mature if one cannot withhold expression of emotions and moods. Even when we try to hide our feelings, our involuntary movements and body stance give them away, regardless of what we may be saying vocally. The slumped body and slow heavy walk are easily seen to be symptomatic of depression or sadness, the tapping fingers of agitation or anger, the hands clenching and rubbing together of nervousness or fear.

Analysing the language

The dance composer has this movement language as a basis but requires a means of analysing the content so that they may take the symptomatic human behaviour patterns, refine them, add to them, vary them, extract from them, enlarge them, exaggerate parts of them according to the needs in composition. The movement analysis which is most useful and comprehensive is that which Rudolf Laban presents in his books *Modern Educational Dance* and *Mastery of Movement*. Although one can refer to it as an analysis, in that it breaks down movement into various components, it does this only in a descriptive way. It is not a scientific breakdown as found in the sciences of anatomy, physiology, mechanics or biochemistry. It is a means by which anyone, with knowledge of Laban's principles, can observe and describe movement in detail.

It is not my intention to describe Laban's analysis in depth for the reader can find this in some of the books listed at the back of this book. Table 1 (page 19) is a simplified version which serves the immediate illustrative purposes.

Choice of content

Laban's analysis of movement serves the dance composer well because it classifies movement into broad concepts. Each concept suggests a range of movement which may be explored. For example, let us take the concept of travel. This is defined by Laban as a series of transferences of weight from one place to another. The intention is to move from A to B, and the word travel describes this, but it can be done in numerous ways. Each mode of travelling is characterised by the way in which the mover uses action, qualities of movement or dynamics (called effort in the translation of Laban's writings) and space, and how the dancer relates the travelling action to an object or person, if this is relevant. In dance, the choice of characterisation depends upon what the mover intends to convey. For instance, to express the joy of meeting the travel may take:

the action form of leaps, hops, skips, turns, on the balls of the feet, with
 swinging arm gestures emphasising stretched limbs and body

the qualities of quick, accelerating, light, buoyant, free flowing or continuous

Table 1
A summary of Laban's analysis of movement

<p><i>Action of the body</i></p> <p>Bend – Stretch – Twist Transference of weight – stepping Travel Turn Gesture</p> <p>Jump – five varieties Stillness – balance</p> <p>Body shapes Symmetrical and asymmetrical use Body parts – isolated – emphasised</p>	<p><i>Qualities of movement</i></p> <p>Time – sudden – sustained – quick – slow</p> <p>Weight – firm – light relaxed</p> <p>Flow – free – bound – (on- – (stop- – going) – pable)</p> <p>Combinations of two elements – eg, firm and sudden Combinations of three elements eg, light, sustained and free</p>
<p><i>Space environment</i></p> <p>Size of movement – size of space Extension in space Levels – low, medium and high Shape in space – curved or straight Pathways – floor patterns – air patterns curved or straight Directions in space: the three dimensions planes diagonals</p>	<p><i>Relationship</i></p> <p>Relating to objects – relating to people Alone in a mass Duo: copying – mirroring leading – following unison – canon meeting – parting question and answer Group work: numerical variation group shape inter-group relationship spatial relation- ships over, under, around etc.</p>

Dance composition

the spatial form of forward in high level, large peripheral movements

the relationship form of moving towards another dancer

On the other hand, to express dejection or distress, the travel may take:

the action form of a slight run . . . into walk . . . into fall and slide on knees
 . . . body moving from stretched into curled shape . . .
 arms gesturing then falling to sides

the qualities of deceleration through the movement from quite quick
 to very slow, loss of tension from light tension to heavy
 relaxed feeling, the flow becoming more and more
 bound/held back

the spatial form of forward direction to low level moving on a straight
 pathway from centre to forward centre

Thus, in use of Laban's analysis to help the choice of movement content and to depict the intention, the dance composer can choose the action and colour it with any qualitative, spatial or relationship content so that the resulting movement expresses the intention in the composer's own unique way.

There is no one way of showing meaning in movement but there are accepted patterns which define a general area of meaning, and which the composer should employ so that the work can be understood. These originate from the natural symptomatic movement language of humans. Invariably, people of different cultures will interpret what they see in different ways but, even so, there must be some consensus of opinion on such things as mood and idea which the work portrays. For example, if there were strong, striking, fighting, movements between two dancers, agreement will be on conflict rather than harmony, or, if the movements were to be slow, gentle, surrounding, supporting, unified in time and complementary in space, it would show harmony rather than conflict.

Literal movement into dance content

In addition to the major concern for the choice of material that clearly identifies meaning, the dance composer has the responsibility of making movement content as original and interesting as possible. To do this Laban's analysis may be used as a frame of reference, and different combinations of action, qualities, space and relationships can be tried. The idea of praying will illustrate this point. Images of the literal human movement patterns connected with praying kindles the imagination at the start – hands together, standing with head lowered, a fall on to the knees or even prostration. This range is made more extensive by the composer's analysis and subsequent handling of the movements. For instance, the hands together – head lowered movement can be taken:

action, qualitative
and spatial form

while standing, from an open sideways extension of the arms, trace a peripheral pathway to forward medium, palms leading, slowly bringing the hands together, fingers closing last, with the head back. Then drawing the arms in towards the body centre, allow the chest to contract and curve inwards. To be taken with a sudden impulse at the beginning of the movement into a sustained closing of the hands with increase of tension from fairly firm to very firm

OR

Move the arms from a symmetric position in front of the head, elbows and wrists bent, successively right then left to diagonally high in front then down to the centre position. This should be done while walking forwards four steps – head moving from low to high – with a firm slow quality throughout. The hands finish close but not touching

It can be seen from these two examples that by having the basic symptomatic pattern in mind, the composer, through analysis, can identify what it embraces in terms of movement content, its action, the qualities embedded in the actions, its spatial usage and then use these aspects in his/her own way enlarging them, highlighting parts of the actions (eg, the clasping hands), add actions (eg, the trunk movement), alter the rhythm and dynamics or the spatial form.

In other words, the composer uses the analysis, first as a means of observing and identifying the nature of the movement as it is in everyday communication, and second, as a means of enriching it into dance content. This should ensure that the movement is both meaningful and interesting. It is difficult to retain a balance between meaning and originality. Care must be taken that the everyday movement origin has not been lost by too much enrichment, nor should it be presented in the form of cliché which only leads to dull uninteresting work.

Exploring a range of movement

The composer should, therefore, explore and experiment within a wide range, so that he/she becomes fully acquainted with movement and the feeling/meaning connotations. He/she should, at times, set out to explore a full range of movement without using it in composition, for this enriches movement experience and, inevitably, when starting to compose there is a better basis from which to make a choice of content. While exploring, the composer will consciously or intuitively experience the expressive properties of the movement, and the feel of it will be stored in the memory for future use. On the other hand, it may be that, while exploring movement for its own sake, an idea is evoked which will make a composition. In this way, movement itself becomes a stimulus for composition as the feeling has acted upon the composer, and then been transposed into content. To do this the composer must move from feeling to knowing – knowing what the movement is – analysing it and using its complexity as a starting point for the dance.

If, for example, the dancer is engaged in exploration of turning as an action, he/she will be led by the teacher's or his/her own knowledge of the analysis, to take the action on both feet, on one foot, on one foot to the other, on different parts of the feet, with hops, jumps, steps, with leg and arm gestures leading into the action across the body or away from the body – producing inward or outward turns – spiralling from low to high and vice versa – taking a wide spread stepping turn – holding the leg high in the air whilst slowly pivoting on the supporting leg – initiating turns with various body parts and many more variations each having its own expressive content. The outward turns may have a feeling of exhilaration, while the hopping, jumping turns also express joy and excitement. An inward closed turn may suggest fear or turning away from something or someone. Turns

which increase in speed generate excitement. A slow wandering turn may suggest searching. While the dancer is actually performing the movement, he/she should have some kind of feeling about it. Even if it is not possible to name a mood or emotion that is evoked when it merely feels nice, good, or clever, it carries with it a colour and mode of being. All movements have expressive properties which are employed as a means of communicating ideas about human feelings, events or even about the movements themselves.

Movement and meaning

It should be clear that movement is a vast communicating language and that varieties of combinations of its elements constitute many thousands of movement 'words'. Also, in the context of a dance, movements have to be understood as meaningful in juxtaposition with others. Very often it is a phrase of actions that portrays a single 'word' meaning, or conversely, one movement can give a whole 'paragraph' of content. To transform a vocabulary of movement into meaningful visual images, the composer is dealing with three intangible elements: movement, time and space. How the meaning can be enhanced by the composer's use of time and space will be discussed later. Meaning in the movement itself is of importance now.

Presentation of literal movement is not dance. The art of mime aims for realistic representation of movement to communicate literal meaning. Dance often uses conventional and mime-based gestures but the composer may choose to manifest the idea in a more symbolic way. This is done by abstracting an essence from the literal movement which is then given a unique flavour through artistic manipulation. Similarly the poet, rather than make direct statements, may use metaphor and simile to establish images which can have several possible meanings within the poem's context.

Although it derives from fundamental human movement, symbolic dance movement imagery can pose several interpretative possibilities. To a certain extent, it depends upon the nature of the audience as to how open to interpretation the composer can make the dance. Some audiences, wishing to be entertained without much effort, require readily recognised movement images, while others tend to enjoy looking more deeply.

The following description of a particular dance may help to explain a little

about the range of movement imagery open to a composer, and the scope of interpretation some particular movement images present to an audience.

Solo dance titled *Confession*

Music: single instrument – slow, smooth, introspective, quiet and harmonic

1. Movements included:

- closing and crossing movements of arms and legs
- peripheral arm gestures to cover head
- opening and extending arms and legs very low to the ground
- stepping and opening sideways, arms high and to side, wrists flexed palms up, chest high and the head up
- closing one hand above the other and both hands above head but not touching
- hands clasped with fully stretched arms in varying directions
- hands opening and extending with wrists and forearms touching
- twisting trunk movement with palms of hands near the face
- forwards and backwards rocking movements with leg gestures extending just off the ground, arms held close to the body
- falling to the knees into sideways roll returning to one knee and extending forward
- turning from open body positions into closed body positions
- jumps with arms and one leg high in front
- travelling with long low runs and ending suddenly in a fall

These are a few examples of the movements in the dance. The description is hardly full enough for the reader to be able to translate it into movement but a range of movement ideas should be apparent and something of the composer's interpretation of the dance idea may have emerged.

2. Interpretations:

- something to do with religious confession – the confessing person feels shame, prays, shows humility, reverence and confidence in receiving forgiveness
- something to do with confessing a feeling of love – the confessing

person feels guilty and afraid yet joyful in the revelation of a hitherto hidden feeling of love

- something to do with a penitent criminal feeling remorse, shame, self-pity and a dawning of hope in anticipation of freedom

The composer might have had one of these ideas in mind. The first few movements would suggest an interpretation of the title to each viewer who would then 'read' the images to fit into the interpretation. If a dance is as 'open' as this, the composer has extended the movement content away from the literal and into the realms of symbolism. The symbols themselves are recognisable in this dance for all the interpretations acknowledge confession but the contexts of the confessions vary. The symbols therefore act as suggestions and finer details in interpretation are left to the viewer's imagination.

Stylising the material content

The above text has considered a range of natural movements as a source for dance expression. However, there are a number of pre-formulated, tried and tested dance techniques which also constitute an essential part of the dance composer's repertoire. For further discussion on various techniques, the concept of style and processes of stylising dance material, see *Methods of construction* 6, p. 81.

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Section 2

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Methods of construction 1

The beginnings

Stimuli for dance

A stimulus can be defined as something that rouses the mind, or spirits, or incites activity. Stimuli for dance compositions can be auditory, visual, ideational, tactile or kinesthetic.

Auditory stimuli

Auditory stimuli include music, the most usual accompaniment for dances. Very often, the dance composer starts with a desire to use a certain piece of music, the nature of which has stimulated a dance idea. With so many kinds of music, the dance composer must be aware of the nature of the music (emotive, atmospheric, abstract, lyrical, comic, dramatic, architecturally patterned) so that if it is to be used as the accompaniment, it complements rather than conflicts with the idea.

The music not only dictates the kind of dance, but also its mood, style, length, phrasing, intensities and overall form. Music, therefore, provides a structured framework for the dance, and the stimulus becomes more than a springboard. If music is used as accompaniment, the dance cannot exist without it. Sometimes, a dance composer may be inspired by a piece of music and, because of its complexity or purity, decide not to use it as accompaniment. In this case, perhaps the quality, or design, in the music could be taken and transposed into dance content. The dance form that emerges need not emulate the form of the piece of music and, when it is complete, the dance should be able to exist for itself without reference to the stimulus.

Other auditory stimuli include sound percussion instruments, human voices, words, songs and poems. The mood, character, rhythm and atmosphere of the dance can exist without this. For instance, a poem may have been the stimulus,

but the dance composer finds he/she cannot interpret all the words into movement, so uses it in a different way. Perhaps it is decided necessary to hear the poem before watching the dance, or to hear a few lines, which make the essence of it, as punctuation of the movement giving its meaning. On the other hand, once it has stimulated the idea or mood, the dance composer may not need to use the poem at all. The composer may even turn to another source for accompaniment, music perhaps. If, however, the poem is used as accompaniment for the dance, the two must appear to the viewer as inseparable in the manifestation of the idea.

Percussion instruments, human voices, sounds in nature or the environment often make interesting and dynamic stimuli for dance. Here, the interpretation of movement can be purely imitative in quality and duration, or perhaps, the association of ideas related to the sounds could provoke emotional, comic or dramatic interpretations. There is far less restriction in the way that these stimuli can be used than with music, and the dance composer has to take care that the dance and the sound accompaniment have form which give structural unity.

Visual stimuli

Visual stimuli can take the form of pictures, sculptures, objects, patterns, shapes, etc. From the visual image, the composer takes the idea behind it, as he/she sees it, or its lines, shape, rhythm, texture, colour, purpose or other imagined associations. A chair, for instance, may be viewed for its lines, its angularity, its purpose in holding the body weight, or it may be seen as a throne, a trap, an object to hide behind or under, an instrument for defending oneself, or as a weapon.

Visual stimuli provide more freedom for the dance composer in that, often, the dance stands alone and unaccompanied by the stimulus. However, the dance should make the origin clear if it is to be an interpretation of it.

Kinesthetic stimuli

It is possible to make a dance about movement itself. Some movement or movement phrase takes on the role of a kinesthetic stimulus, and the dance is derived from this basis. The movement, in this case, has no communicative purpose other than the nature of itself. It does not intend to transmit any given idea but it does have a style, mood, dynamic range, pattern or form, and these

aspects of the movement, or movement phrase, can be used and developed to form the dance which is an exposition on movement itself. (See *Vocalise*, the solo on the accompanying DVD as an example).

Tactile stimuli

Tactile stimuli often produce kinesthetic responses which then become the motivation for dances. For example, the smooth feel of a piece of velvet may suggest smoothness as a movement quality which the composer uses as a basis for the dance. Or, the feel and movement of a full skirt may provoke swirling, turning, freely flowing, spreading movements which then become the main impetus for the dance composer.

A tactile stimulus could also become an accompanying object. A very fine piece of material, for instance, could be manipulated by the dancers and form a moving part of the dance, complementing, linking, dividing, enveloping and following the dancers. It is important, however, that the manipulation of the stimulus does not become the overriding part of the dance, the dancers' movement appearing secondary.

Ideational stimuli

Ideational stimuli are perhaps the most popular for dances. Here the movement is stimulated and formed with the intention of conveying an idea or unfolding a story. If the idea to be communicated is war, immediately the composer's range of choice is limited to movement that will suggest this. Ideas, therefore, provide frameworks for the creation of dances. Furthermore, stories or happenings have to be sequentially portrayed in narrative form.

To conclude

The stimulus forms the basic impulse behind the work and then goes on to structure it. Some structure the outcome more forcefully than others. Often, several stimuli collectively will influence the work and perhaps, as in the case of music, the stimulus accompanies the dance.

The dance composer's concern is, firstly, whether or not the stimulus is suitable to inspire a dance, and, secondly, if it is to accompany the dance, how this could occur. This concern may derive from a wish that the dance portray enough of the stimulus to be clear in intention. Obscurity of purpose will cause it to fail in

communication. The stimulus is the basis of the motivation behind the dance. If the composer has based the dance on a creative response that relates to the stimulus, and intends that the dance be understood as such, the stimulus should clearly stand out as an origin, even if it is not present.

This suggests that the dance composer has to decide whether or not successful communication of the idea *depends* upon knowledge of the stimulus as an origin. Perhaps it is not necessary for the audience to know the original stimulus, since the dance outcome, as in the case of a dance inspired by a piece of music which has not been used as accompaniment, may well be able to stand on its own, without reference to the stimulus. Often though, the dance title suggests the original stimulus, enough at least to understand the motivation. In any event, whether apparent in the outcome or not, the stimulus dictates the type of dance.

Types of dance

Broad classification of dances is generally quite simple for, like music or any other art, we accept terms such as classical, modern, ethnic, jazz, pop, street. Commonly accepted terms are also used when describing types of dance composition more specifically. These include pure, study, abstract, lyrical, dramatic, comic and dance-drama.

A pure dance and a study

We say pure dance when we mean that it has originated from a kinesthetic stimulus and deals exclusively with movement. A study is pure, but a dance can be pure and be more than a study. A study suggests that the composer has concentrated on a limited range of material. For example, a picture may be called a study when it is portraying a bowl of fruit, or a portrait may fit the description. In music, a study is often in one key and perhaps within a certain range of technical skills. The dance study may be confined to one kind of movement, perhaps rise and fall or a scale range of time. A dance which is described as pure, generally has no limitations of movement range; it may have several sections in it, each of which has different movement emphasis.

The movement content in a pure dance may be simpler for the performer than that in a study. The latter often demands more complex movement and

aims to show virtuosity and academic understanding of its chosen content. The ballet *Etudes*, choreographed by Harald Lander, provides an example. The total ballet may be classified as a pure dance, yet each small part in isolation can be described as a study. To mention two, there is a study on the *plié* section of the barre work, and a study on *petite batterie*, but collectively, the whole ballet gives an overall view of the phases and total rhythm of the ballet class. Because the idea is about a certain style of movement, the ballet is pure in classification. Further examples of pure ballets include George Balanchine's *Symphony in C* and *Agon*, and Frederick Ashton's *Symphonic Variations*, where the movement itself as interpretation of the music becomes the basis for beautifully formed works of art. Martha Graham's *Adorations* also fits into this category as an example of technique class work presented in a superbly structured dance work.

Abstract dance

Abstract is a confusing term. In the fine art sense, Webster's Dictionary (1966) offers the following definition:

... presenting or possessing schematic or generalised form, frequently suggested by having obscure resemblance to natural appearances through contrived ordering of pictorial or sculptural elements.

Of dance composition, however, the dictionary defines abstract as:

... lacking in concrete program or story.

This latter definition is wide and meaningless. If a dance lacks a story it is not necessarily abstract. If it lacks a concrete programme it can have no logical development, clear manifestation or communication, in which case it is not a dance. Often, young dance composers think they are 'with it' and very modern if they present a series of unrelated and therefore 'non-programme' movements as an abstract dance. Perhaps it works in the static visual arts for viewers have time to ponder, look from all angles and read meaning into it as they wish. The dance audience cannot look and ponder. A temporal art cannot be abstract in this sense of the word, its images must somehow be linked and connected.

If we accept the definition of fine art, then we see that the dance composer could justifiably portray images which are abstracted from the natural and bear resemblance to it. Obscurity, however, should be avoided. There is no time to delve into depths to find hidden resemblances to the natural, these should appear easily and very quickly. Maybe several *abstractions* can be put over in the manifestation of one idea, eg, 'shape'. The dance is abstract when it is the result of *abstraction*, which is:

... something that comprises or concentrates in itself the essential qualities of a larger thing or several things.

Webster's Dictionary (1966)

Like the 'shape' dance, a dance entitled 'magnetism', or a dance entitled 'time', which portrays a variety of images based upon the phenomenal and human aspects of the concept, could be examples of concentration on a 'larger thing', whereas a dance entitled 'conformity', which portrays images of following in step pattern, imitating mannerisms, waiting one's turn in a queue, might be an example of concentration upon the essential quality of 'conformity' in several otherwise unrelated things.

Thus an abstract dance implies that the composer has abstracted some thought about one thing or several things, and identifies these through movement images which bear fairly close resemblance to them.

Lyrical dance

Lyrical dance is a category often used and is quoted in Webster's Dictionary (1966) as:

... a tender dance

In reference to the song as a lyric composition, the dictionary defines it as:

... having a relatively light, pure, melodic quality

It is unnecessary to categorise this as a separate type, for it suggests poetic mood which may well be a dominant characteristic of a pure dance or even an abstract dance. The term lyrical, therefore, suggests the quality of a dance.

Dramatic dance and dance-drama

Dramatic dance implies that the idea to be communicated is powerful and exciting, dynamic and tense, and probably involves conflict between people or within the individual. The dramatic dance will concentrate upon a happening or mood which does not unfold a story. Dance-drama, on the other hand, has a story to tell and does so by means of several dramatic dance episodes or scenes sequentially arranged. A dance depicting Lady Macbeth's agony of mind would be a dramatic dance, but portrayal of the actual story of *Macbeth* would be dance-drama.

Because dramatic dance and dance-drama are concerned with emotions and happenings related to people, characterisation is a prominent feature. The composer has to study character and mood carefully, and to understand how to dramatise the movement content for dance. This, he/she learns is done through exaggeration of the action, quality or space characteristics, particular development of the rhythmic patterns and emphasis on body shape and stance.

Stress on the qualitative content in movement always tends to give dramatic impact. Also, in a dramatic dance there is nearly always a relationship between people, or between an individual and an object, and these relationships are always emotive. However, orientation of the relationship must not remain strictly between dancers and the confines of their space. The composer should take care that the audience also can identify with the dramatic relationships within the dance. Projection of dramatic involvement is a difficult technique in dance composition. The composer must try many ways of putting this across. Perhaps spatial placement, directional alignment and the use of focus are of paramount importance.

Comic dance

Another category which must be included is comic dance. Movement material requires a certain kind of handling if it is to be comic. Essentially original or unusual ways of moving and relating to the environment and other people can be comic. Comic movement might be achieved by making body parts move in peculiarly co-ordinated ways taking them out of their normal space zones. Inverting the stance; performing movements which are usually taken on the vertical plane on a horizontal plane; stressing the use of the face and very small body parts like the fingers or toes; could make movements comic. The composer

could also try for the unpredictable in movement, for example, a very large, grand, sweeping gesture with travel on a circular pathway finished with stillness and just one finger moving up and down.

Very often comic dances are mimetic in nature or have parts which are mimetic. The movement content here can be very representational of real life or, perhaps, have deviations or exaggerations of certain elements which cause comedy.

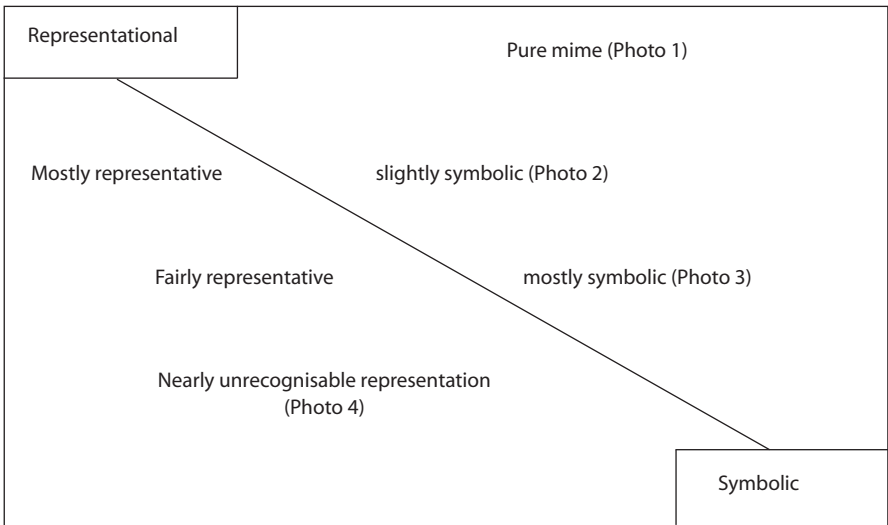
Mode of presentation

It is necessary to discuss *how* the movement content is to be presented by the dance composer.

Supposing a decision has been made on the type of dance to be composed and the accompaniment, if there is any. It is quite probable that the stimulus which prompted the idea brought into the composer's mind images of movement related to their own experience, which convey the idea, feeling, mood or happening. For example, sadness conjures up images of people bent, slow moving, small movements, swaying, hand wringing, head in hands, etc. In a dance to depict these human movements exactly as they are in real life, is to use the movement in a purely *representational* way. To use these movements, extracting the essence or main characteristics and adding other features in action or dynamic stresses, is to use the movement in a *symbolic* way.

To symbolise something suggests that there must be a certain sign or signal which details its origin, and the other aspects of it may be unique and perhaps unreal. For example, a gentle sway in sadness may be taken as a large body movement into side extension followed by a circular upper trunk movement with a turn.

Pure representational presentation is mime and from this extreme there are degrees of representation through symbols to the most 'symbolic' and least representative which is a *nearly* unrecognisable presentation. The word *nearly* is stressed because if it is unrecognisable then it fails. The least representative to reality makes the movement open ended in that there may be quite a number of interpretations of its meaning. This may be because the signal that the composer chooses to retain is very weak juxtaposed to his/her own unique embellishments. Nevertheless, something within the range of possible representative meaning must be clear to the onlooker.



The composer, then, stimulated by his/her own experience of meaning in movement, decides how to present the meaning, representing it as it is in real life or symbolically portraying it in an original way. Most dances are symbolic presentations of movement but if they are to be successful the symbols must be identifiable and meaningful to the audience.

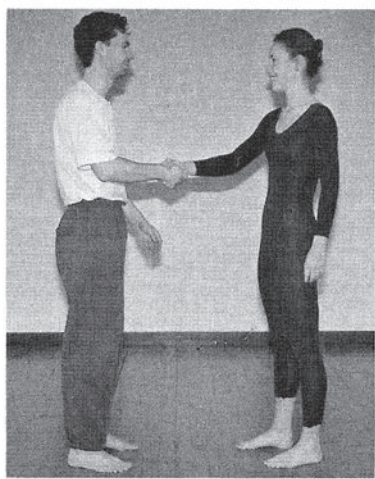
Improvisation

The composer has already made some decisions before beginning to move. A decision to use a certain stimulus or several stimuli has inspired thoughts about the kind of dance to be composed, ie, comic, abstract, dramatic. In deciding this, the composer has also foreseen the kind of presentation he/she is to use, ie, symbolic – representational.

Now is the moment to start composing. The dance composer experiments with movement and tries to realise imagined movement images into real movement expression. This initial exploration is called *improvisation*.

Improvisation which comes from within, a sheer abandonment in movement to indulge feeling, is not often the kind of improvisation used by dance composers though this feeling may well be tapped and recaptured as the basis for a composition.

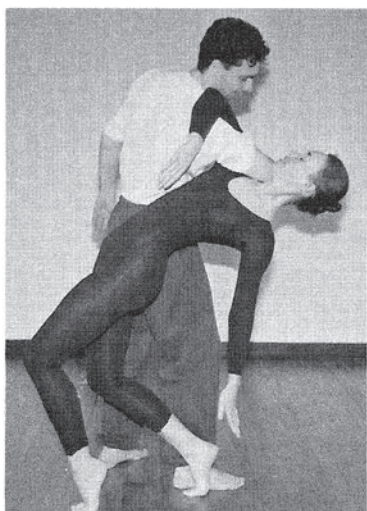
When dancers are moving to a piece of music, the improvisation which



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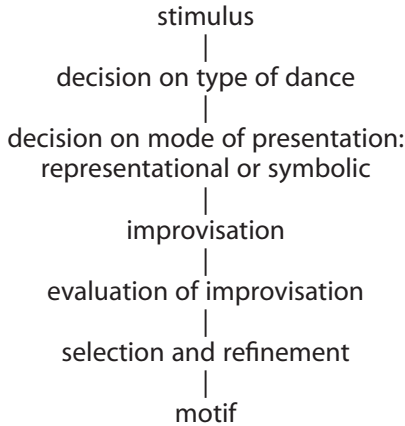
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emerges is less free because the mood and 'colour' of the music suggest the interpretation, and indicate moving in a certain way – governed by the changes in tempo, tone, pitch, etc., and its style, form and character. The experimentation with movement is confined to that which is suitable for *interpretation* of the music, and this kind of improvisation – although more limited – is commonly used as a starting point for composition.

The beginnings of composition



Improvisation is spontaneous, transient creation – it is not fixed, it is not formed. During improvisation, there are moments when a movement feels right and fits the composer's image. When this occurs, the improvised movement phrase can be recaptured to provide the basic ingredient for the composition. The movement or movement phrase which evolves in this way may be a suitable starting point for the composition process. In evaluating this matter, the composer may use one or more of the following criteria:

1. the movement has meaning and relevance to the idea for the dance
2. the movement is interesting and original in action, dynamics and spatial patterning
3. the movement has potential for development

This evaluation pre-supposes considerable knowledge of both material and form,

a knowledge which is acquired through experience. The apprentice-composer starts from *feeling*, not knowing, and may select a starting movement intuitively. Success is limited, however, if intuition only is relied upon for too long. The reverse can, also, present problems, as knowing without feeling often produces sterile, uninteresting and purely academic dances. Feeling and knowing should always be interrelated. How feeling can consciously be brought into knowing and remain as an artistic stimulus will be discussed later.

The starting point for movement is the first piece of composition. It has been selected, evaluated and refined, and is now set as the initial motivating force for the rest of the dance. This movement or movement phrase is called the *motif*.

The composer continues to employ improvisation in developing, varying and elaborating on the starting motif, and finding new ones for the rest of the composition.

Methods of construction 2

Motif into composition

To recap, creativity is a quest for order. When we create we aim for completeness and logical design. Every part of the whole should seem necessary and inevitable.

For the dance to be a meaningful whole it must have recognisable form. A whole is made from a number of components and the dance composer's components include:

1. each dancer's body as an instrument which has volume, shape and the capacity for action
2. movement which has physical properties of time, weight, and flow – the interaction of which determines the form and style of the action
3. space, which can be shaped by movement
4. the relationships that the body can make with other things or people

Arrangement of material

How the components are arranged produces the form of the work of art:

Art expression, like form created by a shifting kaleidoscope, is forever changing, forever new. The myriad of geometric designs that one sees in the kaleidoscope are all made from the same elements, variously shaped pieces of coloured glass but as the relationships of these coloured objects to each other are changed, new forms ensue.

(Hayes, 1955, p. 1)

In dances, too, the elements of the composer's movement vocabulary are arranged so that they have various relationships to each other. Yet if the dance is successful, the patterning or juxtaposition of movements is *not* the noticeable

feature; it is the skilful arrangement of known movement skills that makes successful and aesthetic results in these activities.

Form

A dance aims to communicate an idea and, therefore, there is much more to it than the mere arranging of movements. It has a *form*, an overall shape, system, unity, mould or mode of being. This outer shell, or constructional frame, is the outstanding feature which supports the inner arrangement of its components. Having seen a dance, the viewer does not remember each and every movement or their order. Rather, the impression of the whole is remembered; its shape, whether it rounded off as it began, the excitement of the development into the climaxes, the main message it conveyed and how original and interesting was the overall impact.

So the composer has two main tasks. Simultaneously and with artistic awareness he/she should:

1. select movement content, using the dancer/s
2. set the movement into a constructional frame which will give the whole its form

What is a motif?

There must be a foundation for logical development or form. The foundation of a dance is its initial motif. This will have emerged during improvisation through the influence of the stimulus, the composer's artistic imagination, and his/her movement interpretation of the two. Webster's Dictionary (1966) defines the word motif as:

... a theme or subject – an element in a composition especially a dominant element.

Langer (1953) says (author's italics):

The fundamental forms which occur in the decorative arts of all ages and races – for instance the circle, the triangle, the spiral, the

parallel – are known as motifs of design. They are not art ‘works’, not even ornaments, themselves, but they lend themselves to . . . artistic creation. The word motif bespeaks this function: motifs are organising devices that give the artist’s imagination a start, and so ‘motivate’ the work. They drive it forward and guide its progress.

Some of these basic shapes suggest forms of familiar things. A circle with a marked centre and a design emanating from the centre suggest a flower, and that hint is apt to guide the artist’s composition. All at once a new effect springs into being, there is a new creation – a representation, the illusion of an object . . . The motif . . . and the feeling the artist has toward it, give the first elements of form to the work: its dimensions and intensity, its scope, and mood. (p. 69)

The opening motif starts to communicate the idea and the next few phrases need to go on saying the same thing as further qualification of the statement. Because dance is transient this restatement is very important. The musician may establish a melody in the opening bars and then continue repeating the tune, developing it and varying it but keeping its characteristics until it has been well established. Then, perhaps, another melody is introduced which intersperses with the first. The dance composer also has to establish a movement phrase, develop and vary it, so that it becomes known to the viewer, before the dance goes on to say more about the subject.

How is this done? The motif can be as long as a ‘verse’ or as short as a ‘word’. If it is the latter, then, perhaps it is necessary to repeat it exactly at the beginning so that it is established clearly. Repetition of the content, however, is mostly achieved by means of development and variation of the motif(s).

Development and variation of a motif

Let us assume that the motif is the simple action of side step and close. This action is taken using the feet for transference of weight, right foot starting. It is danced using a degree of time and force – is hesitant or continuous in flow, moves in a sideways right direction in relation to the body front, which is facing front in relation to the stage space. The rest of the body remains in the normal standing position.

Using action features

The motif could be repeated again exactly, using the left foot to begin. It could be repeated using a different part of the foot to take weight, for instance, on the balls of both feet, on the heels of both, on the ball of the right foot and heel of the left, on the inside edges of the feet, with the weight passing through the balls to the whole foot. There are many ways. It may be that the initiating foot could lead into the side step with the sole of the foot, or side, or ball, or heel, or edge, or top surface. Or, it may be that the closing foot could be used in such a manner, emphasising a leading part, or taking weight in a particular and different way. The action could emphasise the property of stretch, or bend, or twist in the legs or accompanying body parts. Arm gestures could be added with one or both arms. Leg gestures could be emphasised into the side step, or on the closure, or both. The side and close could be repeated a number of times into a direction of travel, and it could be taken with a turn or change of body front. It could have elevation added to it, into the side step, or the close, or both. It could be taken with a transference of weight onto the knees. Possibly just the side step could be emphasised leaving out the close, or vice versa. The close step, for instance, could be taken by the right foot in contact with the left leg into standing, or crossing over in front of, or behind, the left leg, thereby concentrating on one aspect of the action, extracting it from the rest. The action could be taken with symmetric use of the body, both feet sliding sideways and closing simultaneously with the body evenly placed around its centre. One side of the body could be considerably more emphasised than the other on the side step and perhaps answered by the other side being emphasised on the closing step, giving the whole an asymmetric flavour. Further variation could be achieved by altering the body flow – body parts moving in succession or simultaneously.

Using qualitative features

The qualities or dynamic content of the motif could be developed and varied at the same time as, or apart from, the above actions. The motif could be repeated faster or slower, with acceleration and deceleration; one part of it could be sudden and the other sustained. Thus the rhythm of the motif could be varied. The energy stress could be increased or decreased – from strong to gentle qualities. The side step may be taken as a stamp and the close with very little tension or vice versa.

Different rhythm and weight combinations could be used to give rhythmic patterning. The flow in the motif could be interrupted and held back to give a hesitant quality, or it could be continuous – particularly if a series of side and close steps were taken driving into one direction.

Using spatial features

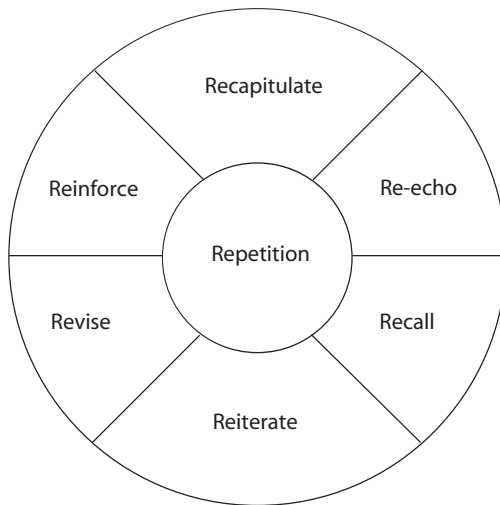
The composer's use of space could be presented as another means of development. The side and close step could be small or large, thus defining how much space it takes. It could be taken at different levels – low, medium, or high – and in different directions. This last would be effected by maintaining the sideways direction of the side step in relation to the body front but changing the direction of the body front in relation to the space environment. Whilst this is done, the action of turning must be used and a floor pattern will emerge. The shape or pathway that the movement creates in the air may be emphasised as a development feature – for example, the right leg could gesture into the sideways step with an arc-like action, accompanied by the arms taking a large outward circling movement, and the closing action could be accompanied by an inward circling of the legs and arms, using less space by bending the knees and elbows. The pathways that emerge could be repeated in different directions, thus making a spatial pattern.

Using the relationship features

The relationship of the parts of the motif to each other could be altered: the closing step done first, then the side step, thus reversing the order. This is more easily illustrated by taking a longer motif like – travel – jump – turn – still. It could be done in reverse order or in different orders. Parts of it could be extracted, used and put back into the original juxtaposition.

Repetition as a constructional element

The word repetition means exactly the same thing again. In the art sense, and in my opinion, the word has wider connotations which could be illustrated as shown on the next page.



Therefore, the notion of repetition as a constructional element implies that the material is manipulated to:

- restate or say again exactly – the mover might do identically the same which could be performed with the other side of the body
- reinforce – making part or the whole of the movement motif more emphasised; this could be done by making the movements larger or by adding more tension or defining the movements by moments of stillness
- re-echo – something of the material which has passed returns into the new content
- recapitulate – the statements occur again shortening or telescoping the content
- revise – to go over again in some detail, making some parts even clearer
- recall – bring back into the memory; in the new material the onlooker is reminded of something that has gone before; the content can be dissimilar, but there is an apparent association
- reiterate – stresses the fact of repetition; there may be several continuous repetitions which perhaps die away

While the composer is using repetition in the expanded sense, a range of developments and variations of the motifs (Table 2) will inevitably emerge. This should ensure that the content is interesting and yet recognisable as *repeated* material.

Table 2
How to achieve repetition of movement content through development
and variation of motifs in solo composition

<p>ACTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Same again – or on other side 2. Use of different body parts 3. Addition of actions – bend, stretch, twist, travel, turn, gesture, stillness, jump, stepping 4. Variation of body flow – simultaneous and successive 5. Subtraction of action from motif 6. Symmetric or asymmetric emphasis 	<p>QUALITY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Same again 2. Speed change 3. Weight variation 4. Time-weight variation 5. Flow variation 6. Contrasting qualities
<p>SPACE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of same space pattern 2. Variation of space pattern: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> size levels extension – near – far directions pathways – on floor – in the air 3. Body shape, line in space 	<p>RELATIONSHIP</p> <p>Variation of relationship through changing the juxtaposition of movements within motifs</p>

REPETITION
through
development
and variation
by:

Types of motif

It is impossible to enumerate the types of motifs that every dance composer is likely to use. Each dance has its own motifs, and each motif has its own characteristics shared by no other. It is possible, however, to generalise to a certain extent in description of motifs in terms of length and content emphasis.

Length of motifs

Some dances use 'positional' motifs. These positions are moved 'into' and 'out of', and act as the landmarks or foundations around which the rest of the dance movement is formed. The motifs, in this instance, are in existence for a short time as momentary positions.

On the other hand, a motif may last for a length of time and could consist of seven or eight movements which create one, two, or even three, movement phrases. It may be that this length of statement is necessary to say one or several things in the dance. It could be presented as a whole, which often happens when the dance is an interpretation of a song or poem. Words in songs or poems are mostly arranged into verse lengths, and the movement can echo this. It is easy for the audience to remember the content because the words in the song or poem become signals for certain parts of the motifs. Very long motifs presented in their entirety without such helpful accompaniment, tend to make it difficult for the onlooker to follow.

Long motifs could be built up piece by piece such as:

movement 1
" 1 then 2
" 1 " 2 then 3
" 1 " 2 " 3 then 4 etc
or movement 1 then development of 1
" 2 " " " 2
" 1 and 2 development and variation of both
" 3 development of 3
" 1, 2 and 3 development and variation into 4

In the final outcome it is only the composer and the dancers who know exactly the length and structure of the motifs which have been used as constructional elements, foundational to the rest of the dance. They need not necessarily be

apparent to the onlooker. Unless there is definite association with the stimulus in defining the duration of each motif, their length should be indistinguishable.

Content emphasis

The nature of the motif may be descriptive in terms of the emphasis it has in content. It is possible to note action, quality or space stresses and to follow these aspects as the motivational forces behind the outcome of the dance.

A dance may be space stressed. For instance, the curved shapes and pathways the dancer makes in the space may be the motifs which the audience would view, rather than the action/quality content. In this case the dancer emphasises the shaping of space through projection into the environment and, if this is successful, the audience will follow these patterns. As a basis for the rest of the dance, the patterns in space then become developed, varied and contrasted into a completed dance form.

The quality content of movement may become the distinguishing feature of the motif. The composer may choose to retain a slow, light and flowing movement quality to establish a quiet feeling and while doing this will use a number of actions. On repeating the quality or developing it, the composer must also concentrate on retaining an identity within the action content. There can be no quality without action. The two cannot really be dissociated, but the slowness, lightness and flowing qualities could be more emphasised than the steps, travels, turns and gestures through which the qualities emerge. The dancer's intention has a great influence on how the audience views the dance. If the dancer concentrates on communication of the quality within the motif, the action content should almost become secondary to it.

An action-based motif is perhaps the easiest to handle. Action motifs can be broken down and put together again, since each piece is identifiable as a separate entity, eg. turn, travel, fall, roll, rise, jump. Actions themselves have inherent meanings and emphasis on the action content can make the quality and space aspects less apparent. Nevertheless, the manner in which each action is performed in terms of quality and its spatial usage is all part of its identity.

Movement is an interrelation of action, quality and space, and no one aspect can exist without the others in the motifs, but one or two can be more emphasised. The dance composer could aim for equal emphasis on all three aspects of the movement content in a motif, and make the movement relate to

an object or person. The first motif establishes the movement emphasis for that part of the dance. It might be rich in content and become clarified and simplified as the dance progresses or conversely, very simple to start with and become richer and more elaborate during the composition.

For most dances the total range of movement content is available to the composer.

The dance design in time

The length of time a movement takes

The composer must be aware that the dance, which exists through time, uses time in a constructive and interesting way. Movement takes time and it is easy to understand that this time can vary in length or duration. The successful composer, therefore, considers the quick, moderate and slow aspects of movement and tries to use them in forming interesting time patterns which are relevant to the idea.

The length of the dance

The time aspect is part of the total rhythm of the dance. This is discussed in more detail in *Methods of construction 4*. It is enough to mention here that the dance composer should be aware that the total length of the dance is vital to the communication of the idea. Dances that are too long lose their impact, and dances that are too short either leave the onlooker surprised and wishing for more, or puzzled at not having had enough to understand the meaning.

The composer should also be aware of the total time picture in relation to the beginning, middle and end of the dance. The beginning may be long, unfolding its content with care, or it may have a vital impact which 'simmers down'. The end may die away gradually into finality or reach a climax after a fairly long middle section. The middle of the dance is too long when the onlooker loses sight of the beginning and does not recognise the end. How the beginning, middle and end share the total duration of the dance is the composer's decision. There are no set criteria for success in this respect. Each dance demands a different length of time.

The dance design in space

The composer must be aware that the dance, which exists in space, uses space in a constructive and interesting way.

First, it should be decided how much space to use, relative to the idea and the space available. Second, a decision should be made about where the front is, if it is not a stage space, or from which angles the dance will be seen to the best advantage. Then there are three further considerations:

1. the dancer's shape in space
2. the pathways created on the floor
3. the pathways created in the air

The dancer's shape in space

The dancer's shape in space creates a visual enhancement of the idea behind the movement. The dancer's *feeling* of shape through the kinesthetic sensation of the movement is a very important aspect of presentation of the dance to an audience.

'Feeling' a static shape can cause a sensation of movement and, unless the composer wishes to use absolute stillness for its own sake, every momentary pause or hesitation which retains body shape should create an illusion of movement. This is done by the dancer's feel of stretch, contraction or rotation continuing on into the space or into, or around the body, and by the dancer's focus. The movement in a body shape either lives or dies and the composer should be aware of each body shape as part of the material content which communicates the idea.

The dancer also makes shapes with the body as it moves and the onlookers see these shape images transmitted as part of the total expression. Therefore, these shapes need to be clearly defined in movement. Extension and control of the dancer's movement in space are technical necessities for success in this respect.

The aesthetic quality of shape in space

The audience might also enjoy the aesthetic qualities the shapes may embody. If this is to be the case the composer must pay attention to the alignment of the dancer in relation to the front. The bodies which face front with the arms and legs

on a forward and backward plane lose their shape and line for the audience. It is vital that the perspective and directional implications of placement in relation to the view are considered. (Photos, 5, 6 below)



5 Wrong alignment



6 Right alignment

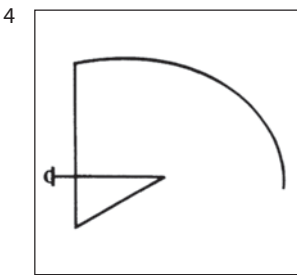
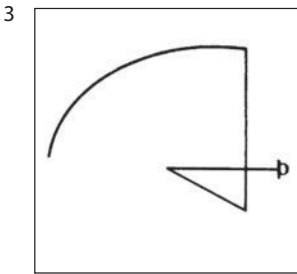
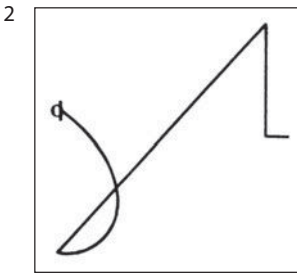
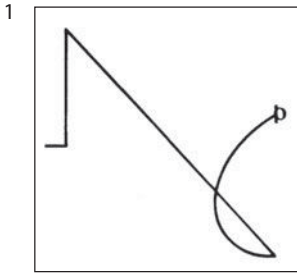
The pathways created on the floor and in the air

The pathways the dance creates on the floor and in the air are living parts of the dance. Curved air and floor pathways create different feelings to those which straight air and floor pathways provoke. Most dances have both straight and curved pathways and these can be presented in interesting ways.

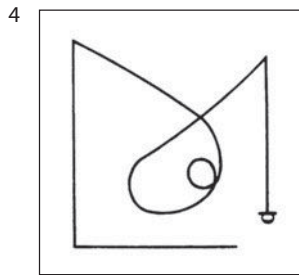
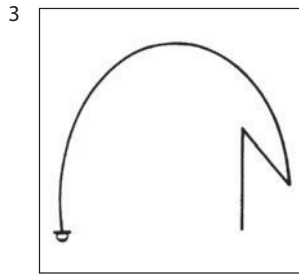
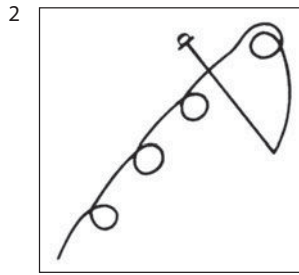
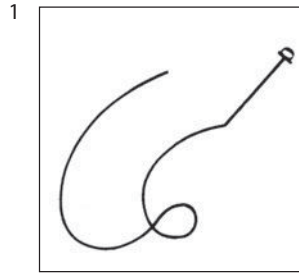
The more formal symmetric patterns on the floor may be matched with similar patterns in the air, or vice versa, or, more asymmetric pathways on the floor may be amalgamated with symmetric air pathways or vice versa. To make a symmetric

floor or air pattern the composer would repeat lines or curves on the other side of the body or stage space so that the pattern is evenly distributed. To make an asymmetric floor pattern the composer would not repeat particular lines or curves.

Symmetric floor pathways



Asymmetric floor pathways



Some composers may actually map out a floor pathway for the dance before composing the movement. This might ensure that the dance makes the fullest use of the space and with interesting patterns. On the other hand, to guide the emergence of floor and air patterns, some composers prefer to create the movement by using their natural space patterning inclinations and the spatial characteristics inherent in movement content. Whichever way it is done, the composer should aim to make the spatial design of the dance visually stimulating.

The use of space is further defined by the spatial characteristics of the movements themselves, their level, size, direction and extension.

Motif in composition

When composing for a soloist, the dance composer makes sure that:

- the idea is established through the movement content which is organised into motifs, developments and variations
- there is enough repetition to confirm the movement images but that repetition is effected in different ways to maintain the onlooker's interest
- the time and space aspects are interesting and varied and enhance the meaning

The initial and succeeding motifs, which emerge through the composer's creative response to the stimulus, act as catalysts for the rest of the dance work. If the motifs are 'right' in content and form, the dance stands a good chance of being successful.

Methods of construction 3

Motif into composition for a group

The group as an expressive element

A group dance can be likened to an orchestra playing of music. Each of the dancers in the group has a vital part to play in the harmonious, living whole.

Numerical considerations

The composer should give careful consideration to the number of dancers needed because everyone must contribute to the interpretation of the idea. There are certain expressive connotations which can be related to numbers. For instance, three people always suggest relationship of 2–1. An uneven number of dancers in the group can suggest the isolation of one to induce some kind of conflict, whereas an even number of dancers can unite harmoniously or suggest symmetry and uniformity. Whatever the intention, the composer should be aware of these inherent connotations, though there can be exceptions. A trio, for example, may well be in harmonious relationship throughout the dance.

Placement and shape of the group

The spatial placing and shape of the group has an effect upon the meaning of the movement. A circle facing inwards suggests unity of purpose excluding all focus from the outside world, whereas the same circle facing outwards, without contact, would imply outer interest and non-unity, or, if contact is made, a combination of inner and outer interest. A line, side by side and square on to the front can mean solidarity and unity, whereas a file has sequential connotations.

Consider, also, the expressive nature of a close mass of dancers as opposed to scattered individuals; a large square group opposed to scattered individuals; a large square group opposed to a small circular group; a circle with one dancer in the centre; a wedge or arrowhead shaped group; a group with a single

individual apart; a group linked by physical contact; two groups of the same size facing each other. There are endless numerical and placement possibilities in group composition but the meaning of the dance is portrayed by its movement content which either supports or negates these natural numerical, placement and shape expressive implications.

Motif, development and variation

Once the composer has established how many dancers to use and how to group and place them, they then have to decide how to orchestrate the movement content for the group. A motif may be established by the whole group in unison which then needs repetition and development so that its meaning becomes clear.

The same possibilities of repetition through development and variation of the motifs exist for the group dance and for the solo (see Table 3 overleaf). Also, an important feature of duo or group composition is the possibility of presenting developments and variations of the movement content at the *same moment in time*. This can be achieved in action, for example, by one person or a small group using the other side of the body, or a different body part, or by some members adding other actions to the motif, such as turn and travel. Developments and variations in action, quality, and use of space by the group can be presented as an interesting orchestration of movement content in time and space in the following ways.

The time aspect

UNISON

- A. same movements
- B. complementary movements
- C. contrasting movements
- D. background and foreground movements

CANON

- same movements
- complementary movements
- contrasting movements
- background and foreground movements

Table 3

How to achieve repetition of movement content through development and variation of motifs in duo or group composition

<p>ACTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Action by doing the same again in unison or canon 2. Action through use of the other side of the body or different body parts 3. Action through addition in action (turn, weight transference, travel, gesture, jump, stillness) 4. Action through extraction of action (part of the movement motif against the whole) 5. Action by changing the body flow (one group successive another simultaneous) 	<p>QUALITY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time-speed contrast within the group 2. Timing-canon-overlapping-sequence 3. Quality variation in time, or weight, or flow, or combination of these factors within the group
<p>SPACE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design by exact copy or complementing to achieve line repetition, or pathway repetition or shape repetition, or a combination of these 2. Space patterning within the group through variation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> size level direction extension pathway 	<p>RELATIONSHIP</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relationship; numerical, placement and group shape variations 2. Juxtapositioning of movement content with the motif or motifs

REPETITION
through
development
and variation
of:

Unison

In unison means that the dance movement takes place at the same time in the group. There are four possibilities of presenting unison (listed on p. 56).

A. Unison: all performing the same movements at the same time. The motif statement is reinforced by sheer multiplicity of number. If there are about twelve dancers, the communication is more forceful than if there are only two or three. This kind of unison is useful at the start of a dance because the audience has only one movement motif to watch and can identify it quickly and, subsequently, follow the intricacies of its development within the group. Also, it may be that the composer uses all the dancers to create the climax. Unison can be made visually interesting by half the group emphasising one side of the body whilst the other half emphasises the other side (unison in opposition).

B. Unison with complementary movements: this implies that movement in the group is occurring at the same time but that parts of the group are not using identical movement. To complement means to *fill out or make more of*, and this, in the context of a group dance, may mean that while one part of the group takes the original basic motif, the other part complements it, and therefore develops it. This can be done by emphasising a different body part or performing on a different level, in a different direction, with a different amount of extension in space, or by slightly changing all the elements of the motif. By this means, the spectator should be able to appreciate simultaneous repetition of the motif which makes visual re-emphasis of the communication.

C. Unison with contrasting movements: this suggests that all movement takes place at the same time yet the smaller groups within the total group are performing contrasted movement patterns. A few dancers may be making slow gentle arm gestures while others are doing fast accented foot patterns. This moment in the composition may introduce a new motif in contrast to the original, while the first is still in view. For dramatic purposes, the differences in the movement of the groups may be highlighted. This last example is quite forceful in presenting opposing material content but it cannot be sustained for long, as it takes a great deal of concentration on the part of the viewer to absorb two simultaneous happenings.

D. Unison with background and foreground: this implies that one part of the group takes on the principal role while the rest of the group moves as a background, subordinate to and supporting the main part. The dancers in the background might constantly repeat an extract of the motif while those in the foreground present the whole motif, or the background might move very slowly to give the effect of a moving backcloth enhancing the main motif.

Canon

In canon means that one part is followed by another in time. The actual amount of time that one part of the group is ahead of the other can be varied. For instance, one group could start a movement phrase and the other group be one moment or several moments behind with the same phrase, or maybe, the phrase is only repeated by the second group after it is completed by the first group. The consecutive groups can come in at any time during, or after the initial phrase.

The following diagram illustrates this point:



The sequence in canon can be started by one person and increase in number, or be started with a number of people and decrease in number.

Continuous canon gives a sequential effect which may well be a feature of part of a group dance when the dancers take it in turns to do a movement or movement phrase. Single movement canon followed by a phrase canon can add interest to the time aspect of a group dance. Use of canon can be varied as follows (listed on p. 56).

A. Canon with the same movements: the composer may wish to restate the motif by using a small part of the group immediately after the whole group, or they may wish to have a short motif repeated in the round-like fashion by several small groups taking turns. Individual dancers within the group could take turns or overlap while performing the same movement content.

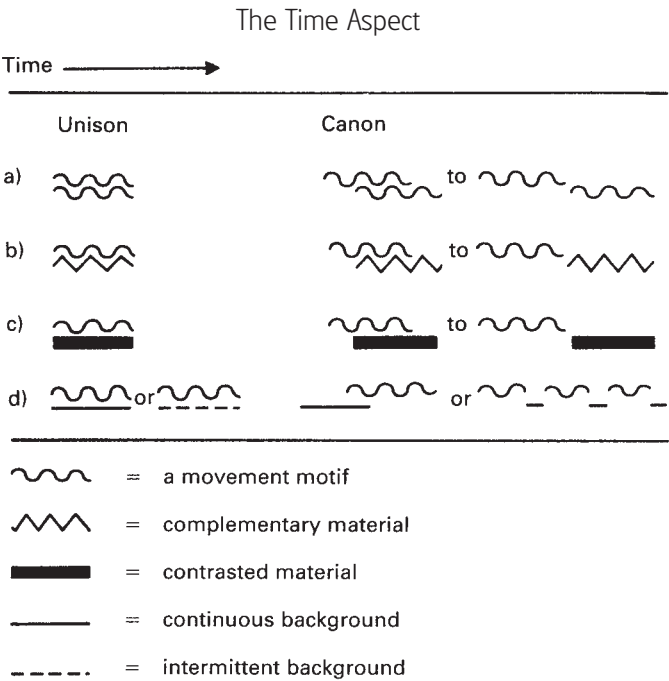
B. Canon with complementary movements: this is known as question and answer, where one part of the group makes a statement and this is followed by

Dance composition

another part of the group making a complementary movement response. The response could overlap or follow the initial statement.

C. Canon with contrasting movements: here the groups take it in turns or overlap with contrasting movement. The composer may wish to establish two groups in turn and use contrasting movement patterns to emphasis their difference.

D. Canon with background and foreground movements: the composer could perhaps establish the background (like a bass introduction to a piece of music) and then bring in the foreground (or melody) during the background movement or immediately after it. The background movement could be used intermittently to punctuate the foreground.



The composer should attempt to use as many of these time aspect variations as are relevant to the idea. By such means, they can introduce and repeat the movement content, through development and variation, in unison or canon, in

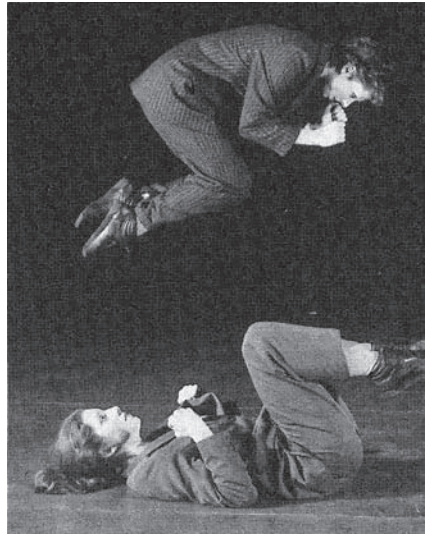
an interesting way within the group. The composer must consider the design of the total length of the dance and the allocation of time for the beginning, middle and end. *Methods of construction 2* dealt with this aspect. Further discussion on the time design of the overall dance form will continue in *Methods of construction 4*.

The space aspect

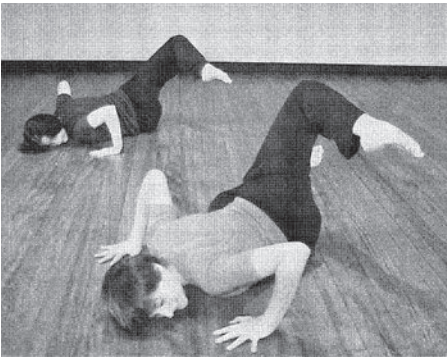
Orchestration of group movement in space

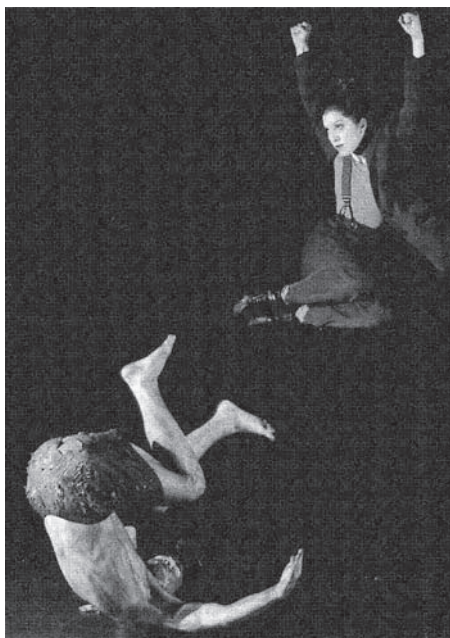
The composer must consider the space aspects to achieve a relatedness of the group throughout the dance. Dance is a visual art: if the movement were stopped the relationship of the dancers should be as apparent as a visual picture. The composer is producing pictures which range from being fleeting in nature to moments of stillness. There are numerous momentary pictures in a dance and even though the movement may not be stopped, these could be appreciated for their visual design.

8. Copying in opposition

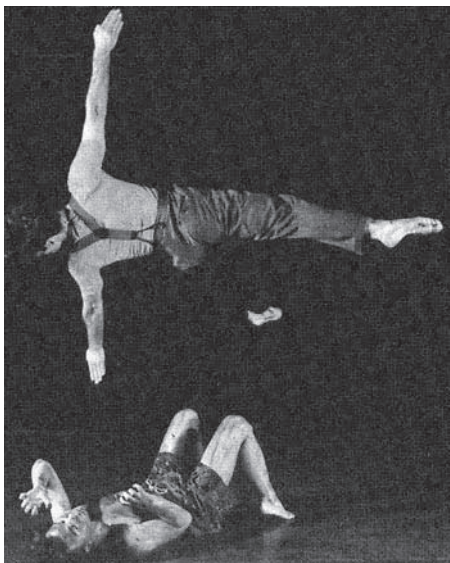


7. Copying





9, 10 Complementary



11, 12, Contrasting

The visual design of bodies

The visual design satisfies the onlooker if relationship can be seen. Through perception of the designs of individual members of the group, and groups within the group, the viewer sees this relationship through *exact copy*, *complementary* or *contrasting* designs. Exact copy or complementary relationship is made apparent through repetition of line or shape. Contrast can be achieved by some members of the group taking different lines and shapes. In viewing a group dance, therefore, repetition and/or contrast can be seen to exist in space during each moment of time.

Visual design as meaning

The lines and shape each dancer creates with their body in space and through space can be related to those of other dancers, either copying, complementing or contrasting, and this visual picture creates a momentary image which holds meaning for the audience (photos 7–12). A group of dancers emphasising curved body shapes and creating curved pathways in the air and on the floor gives a feeling of rounded, harmonious melodic relationship. This could be contrasted with another group creating straight, angular body shapes, moving in straight lines, which might give the feeling of an inter-personal, disciplined and regimented relationship. It is repetition or contrast of the lines and shapes, as well as actions, of the dancers which makes a statement clear. Definition of the group shape in space through such means adds to the statement.

Design of the space

The composer not only has to consider the bodily design of the dancers and groups in space but also the design or shaping of the space itself.

Shaping the space is done by: (a) creating distance or space between members of the group, and (b) by virtue of movement through space.

Distance or space between

The whole of the stage space is available to the dance composer. They decide how much of it to use and how to use it in relation to the idea.

As soon as two dancers, or two groups, separate, space is created between them and it becomes a living element of the dance. If the distance between the two groups is too great the composer has destroyed the relevance of the space

between, as the audience cannot see both moving parts. The nature of the space between is made apparent by the movement content and the dancers' focus – whether it is bonding the two groups, creating a void, or has equal pull from both sides.

As discussed at the beginning of this section, the placing of the dancers or groups in relation to each other suggests meaning. This placing also exposes patterns in space, which, within the context of the idea, should be varied as much as possible so that the dance becomes an exciting visual experience for the viewer.

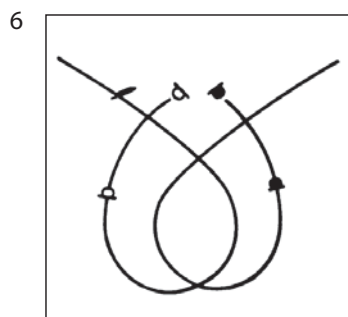
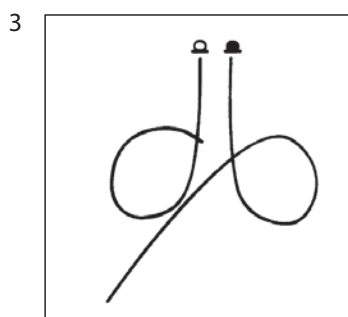
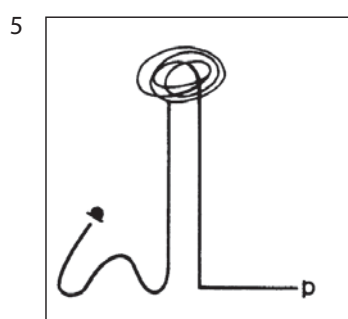
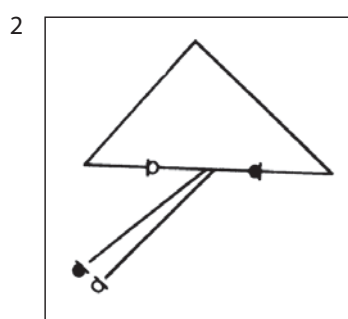
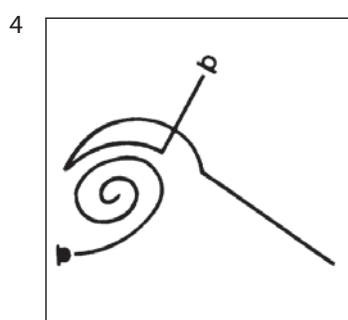
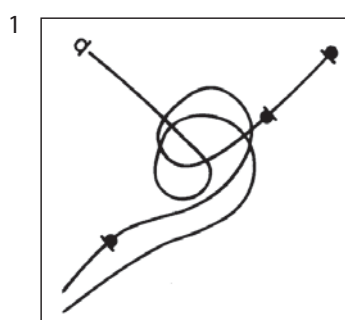
The pathways created by movement

The designs the dance reveals are not only defined by the distance between the dancers and the groups, but movement itself creates spatial pathways. The design which can be visualised by the audience in retrospect is defined by the movement over the floor and in the air. This is temporal spatial design. The composer should endeavour to make it as interesting as possible and keep it a living and inherently expressive part of the total expression.

To conclude

The dance composer who is working with a group, or within a group, should ensure that:

- the idea is established through the movement content which is organised into motifs, developments and variations
- there is enough repetition both in the present and as part of the dance constructed through time; repetition in the present is seen in the design of each dancer or group in relation to the others and in the simultaneous developments and variation of motifs within the group; repetition through time is seen as repetition of design or group shape and/or development and variation of motifs in canon or occurring at a later time in the dance
- the orchestration of the group in time and space is interesting and varied and enhances the meaning behind the dance and makes it a rich visual experience for the onlooker.



- Dancer A
- Dancer B

A sequence of spatial patterns created by movement of two dancers over the floor

Methods of construction 4

The dance form

Design in time

The composer seeking form for the dance should bear in mind that he/she is creating a design in time. This could be called a time picture. Like any picture it is built up of parts. Once the overall meaning is apparent, the parts fit into a shape or *form* which supports them. An analogy to architectural design illustrates this point. Each part of a building must blend into the whole. Even though each can be viewed for itself, it is its relationship with the other parts that gives it meaning. The gables, archways and turrets, for instance, fit into the overall structure defining its shape and style.

Architectural design is static – we can see it all at once. On viewing a dance, however, we can only perceive one piece at a time and we have to put the pieces together in our minds to form a picture of the whole. Since the experience lasts through time, it demands that the dance composer makes the dance pieces by dividing time.

The motif is used as a structural basis for the form. There will nearly always be more than one motif, and different outcomes from each motif must somehow merge into the whole mass with clarity and significance. The motifs themselves create time pictures by the movement which lasts an amount of time, has changing intensities and accents, pauses and stops.

Movements and movement phrases

At the start, the motif has in it a 'word', or a few words, giving a clue to the meaning of the whole. The motif may last in time just as a single 'word' or as a long 'sentence'. If it is the latter it is considered a movement phrase, which has a shape and logical time picture.

The phrase may start with a dynamic, shouting, climactic movement and tail off to a calmer ending, or vice versa, or, build up to an explosive middle part and a calm ending. So the phrase is structured into a rhythmic pattern. The next phrase could take on a different rhythm using the same movement again, but developed, in a different order. Each consecutive phrase makes clearer the idea by re-emphasising the same point, exposing a different view of the same thing, unfolding more content to support the point or even contrasting it by an opposite to give emphasis to the meaning.

Sections

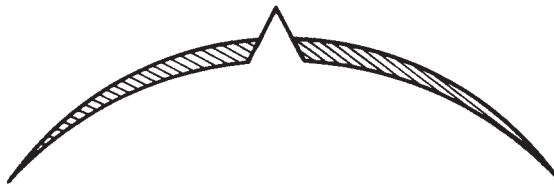
Phrases are usually bound together into sections. A section in a dance may be described as a collection of phrases which are connected – possibly derived from the first phrase which forms the motif, or made up from the inter-relationship of two phrase motifs. A new section would appear with the introduction of new material.

Rhythm and form

Movements, phrases and sections making patterns in time are some aspects of the rhythm of the dance. From this, it follows that every movement has rhythm. The energy which starts the movement, keeps it going and stops it, is given rhythmic shape by application and release of force within its duration of time. The force, or accents, punctuate and divide the time. Going back to the previous examples, a strong quick accent may begin the movement and then it may become slower and less strong to finish in a dying-away manner,



or the build-up could come in the middle of the movement or phrase,



or the end of the movement or phrase may become the most forceful giving a climax to the whole.



Interrelation of the time and weight factors provide the dance composer with a vast range of rhythmic possibilities.

The time picture created in the dance may be symmetrical with the force or accent appearing at regular intervals. This is known as a metric arrangement where the time between the accents is measured out evenly. It can be matched with musical measurements in time, eg, $\frac{4}{4}$. Each metre of time lasts for the same duration, but rhythmic variation can occur within each (see diagrams opposite).

An asymmetric measurement of time is sometimes called breath rhythm. Here the measurements between accents are not even. The movement phrase has its own rhythm, the commas and full stops coming arbitrarily with the natural feeling of the phrase.



Some divisions of time in $\frac{4}{4}$

	1 whole note Semibreve	= 4 beats
	$\frac{1}{2}$ notes Minims	= 2 beats each
	$\frac{1}{4}$ notes Crotchets	= 1 beat each
	$\frac{1}{8}$ notes Quavers	= $\frac{1}{2}$ beat each
	$\frac{1}{12}$ notes Triple quavers	= $\frac{1}{3}$ beats each
	$\frac{3}{16}$ and $\frac{1}{16}$ notes Dotted quaver-semi-quaver	= $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ beat each
	$\frac{1}{16}$ notes Semi-quavers	= $\frac{1}{4}$ beat each
	$\frac{1}{32}$ notes Demi-semi-quavers	= $\frac{1}{8}$ beat each

Various rhythmic arrangements within the time duration of 4 beats

1 2 3 4

= $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$

1 2 3 4

= $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$

1 2 3 4

= $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$

1 2 3 4

= $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$

1 2 3 4

= $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$

Organisation of the form

The organisation of time and force in relation to each movement (whether it is quick, slow, accelerates, decelerates; has strong or light accents at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of it; or increases or diminishes in force throughout its duration) and the organisation of these movements into phrases and sections determines the nature of the dance form. The style and quality of each movement motif will perhaps determine contrasting sections or sections which grow one from the other. The composer then has to consider the *ordering of the sections into a form or design in time*.

There are many ways of organising the form, and each dance should have its own unique structure but, because music is often used as accompaniment and dictates the overall form, musical forms have long been recognised frameworks into which dances are classified whether with musical accompaniment or not. These include binary, ternary, rondo, theme and variations, and fugue arrangements.

Binary form

Binary form is commonly used in dance composition. The first section A is contrasted by a new section B, but the two have a common thread which binds one to the other. Each section may have contrasting elements, but there must be something similar in nature too. Perhaps the movement in section A is predominantly slow and gentle and that in section B, fast and strong, but the action patterns or spatial shape may be the same or similar. On the other hand, perhaps it is only the dance idea that binds them together, each section taking a different aspect of the idea, but in this case too, there must be something else that relates them – perhaps the style of movement.

Ternary form

Ternary form A.B.A is a conventional and satisfying form because going back to the beginning rounds it off. Somehow this produces a comfortable and pleasant 'I knew what was going to happen' feeling in the onlooker. The return to section A can be achieved by exact repetition of the initial section, or by reversing, highlighting parts, changing a few elements and changing the order of elements. They must, however, be very similar to the B section forming the contrast.

Rondo form

Rondo form A.B.A.C.A.D.A and so on, provides the composer with a verse and chorus framework which gives room for variation in the verses and development in the choruses. Variation can produce something new each time, but it must still have enough of the original to be considered a related part to the whole. Development can recall the original in many ways without changing the essence. Again, this is a conventional and satisfying form to watch providing it is interesting enough. The onlooker can quickly identify the chorus movement and enjoy its repetition. (It is like enjoying a song chorus.) Through feeling a kinesthetic sympathy with the dancer, the onlooker can join in.

Theme and variations

Theme and variations is a freer, more asymmetric and exciting form. The theme provides the basis for the variations. This is often called a sequential form in that the initial statement is followed by a number of developments or

variations. The initial statement is not made again, and each variation becomes a basis for the next variation. Therefore the dance can finish with movement which is very different from that of the beginning. It is like watching a film when you do not know how it is to end. The composer has a freedom but must pay attention to connectedness throughout. Even if the initial movement phrase is not repeated, something of its nature should linger in the mind of the onlooker so that, on reflection, they appreciate the range of variations which have emerged.

Canon or fugue

Canon or fugue is a composition in which one or two themes, or motifs, are repeated or initiated by successive dancers. These would then be developed in continuous interweaving of parts into a well-defined single structure. Dance studies in groups can usefully employ this form.

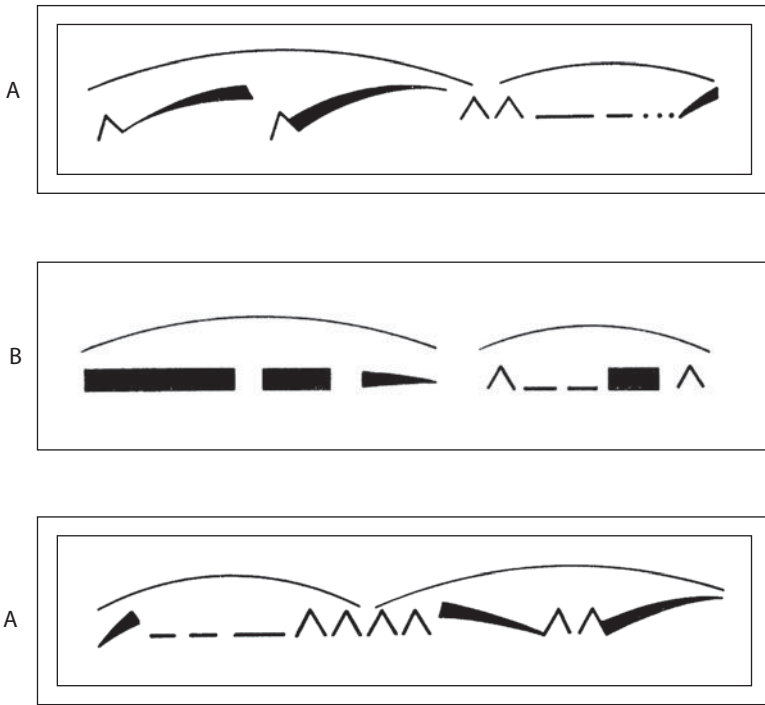
Narrative form

Narrative form is not derived from musical form. The word narrative suggests that there is to be a gradual unfolding of a story or idea. The movement content is sequentially arranged into sections, A.B.C.D.E.F.G, etc, and each section is a further exposure of the idea or story.

If the dance conveys a series of images on one idea, the composer has the problem of linking sections so that each naturally flows into the next in a logical sequence. If the dance tells a story (dance-drama) the composer should make the parts adhere very closely. The sections in it should not always be apparent to the onlooker, although the composer may well find it useful to consider it section by section to ensure that there is richness, contrast, and variation in each part of the whole.

To conclude

The above forms appear cut and dried and easy to distinguish from each other. However, many dances are not true to the conventional forms and may be an amalgamation. For example, a dance may start with an A.B.A form shape, and then go on with C.D and back again to A; or may follow the rondo form, but each new section could follow narrative lines whilst the A section remains a chorus.



There are numerous possibilities open to the composer in the arrangement of the overall form. The essential thing to remember is that each part of the dance must have relevance to the whole.

It might be useful to think of a dance as having outer and inner rhythmic forms. The inner rhythmic form consists of the time/force shape that each movement, movement phrase and section create, while the outer rhythmic form consists of the shape brought about by the juxtaposition of each section in the dance.

The illustration above shows that each movement has a rhythm, each of the phrases has a different rhythmic structure, and that the overall shape has an ABA rhythm – the B section forming a contrast to both As.

Methods of construction 5

Elements of construction

Several elements of construction have already emerged in the discussion on the construction of a dance. It may be useful to convey these in a list so that the reader can select each element and evaluate its constructional purpose in any given dance:

1. the motif(s) (foundation(s) of construction)
2. repetition
3. variation and contrasts
4. climax or highlights
5. proportion and balance
6. transition
7. logical development
8. unity

Each of these elements could be discussed in relation to many forms of art. Each element is related to, and complements, the others. All serve unity which is the overall aim in any art. To achieve unity the other seven elements must be employed.

Motifs

In *Methods of construction 2* and *3*, we have discussed the function of the motifs in composition in some depth. It remains to say that these dominant elements of the composition only emerge as dominant in the light of all the other constructional devices used.

- Without repetition, the motifs would be forgotten.
- Without variation and contrast, repetition of the motifs would be dull if presented ad lib in their original form.

- A dance lacking climax or highlights would seem to have motifs which have no content worth highlighting.
- Without careful proportioning and balancing of the whole work each of the motifs could become almost eliminated or even too dominant.
- Without transitions the motifs would be isolated movement statements. Transitions between movements within the motif and between the motifs are important in defining the phrase and section shaping of the dance.
- Without logical development from motif to motif the theme of the dance would be blurred.

The motifs contain the main ingredients which provide the unifying threads for the whole work. These include the style, qualitative colour, light and shade, line and shape in space, and types of action which motivate the rest of the work.

Repetition

As we have seen, repetition must be recognised as a main device in dance composition. It should be clear that repetition in a dance exists in the form of development and variation of the movement material which is established within each motif. Also that, in the context of dance as an art form, the word repetition has wider interpretations than its normal usage.

Variation and contrasts

These elements of construction differ but complement each other. Variation demands that the content, which has already been established in the dance, is used again in a different way. Contrast demands the introduction of new material either within the original motif during a repetition, or as a variation of the motif. The new material can be another motif of course.

A successful dance should feature both these elements. Variation gives an interesting logical development to the whole providing the necessary means for repetitions of the theme, so that the audience can view it in different ways with growing understanding. Contrasts provide the exciting changes which colour the dance and stand out as points of reference in relation to the total material

content. Contrasts can be effected in many ways, and often – though not always – provide the climaxes or highlights in a dance.

To make a contrast, the composer should consider a change in content but this should not be done for the sake of contrast alone. It must also be relevant to the idea behind the dance. In terms of quality, for example, the slow section could be followed by a fast section, or the predominantly slow section could have a fast movement to break the continuity of slowness. In spatial content predominantly small low level movements could be contrasted by a large high level movement. In action a phrase containing stepping, gesturing and travelling could be contrasted by jumping; a phrase using one side of the body could be contrasted by one movement of the other side; predominantly symmetrical body action could be followed by a sudden change to asymmetric use of the body.

Contrast is not only achieved through sudden changes in content. It is possible to build gradually towards a contrast. Movement might accelerate from slow to quick, show little tension and increase in strength to show a great deal of tension, start low and gradually grow to high level and so on. Contrast emerges if the predominant material of the dance is interrupted or punctuated by fresh or opposing movements. It would seem that the opposite, or near opposite, in content is a requisite feature of contrast.

Climax or highlights

Many people think that a dance should have only one climax, the rest of the content supporting it. In fact, a dance can have many highlights which may or may not be real climaxes too. In retrospect, the moments which are remembered are highlights of the dance and remain of special significance to each particular viewer. In a work of art, no two people view in the same way, and no two people would necessarily agree on the highlight in a dance. If, however, these moments come to fruition in one big climax and this is the intention of the composer, then everyone should see and agree that this is the climax. It depends upon the nature of the dance and the idea whether there is one climax or several climaxes or whether these are merely highlights without the especially noticeable features of a 'super' climax. These latter features may emerge with a sudden attack, or build up slowly to an explosive moment. For example, if the dance has been earthbound and gestural, a sudden series of leaps accompanied by the trunk twisting, bending and

stretching will make a contrast which is also a climax. On the other hand, a climax could be seen as the ultimate development of a motif. In all events, if it is a real climax it should stand out very prominently. Highlights appear like little sparks of interest, and exist through the composer's exposition of artistic, skilled and beautifully conceived movement ideas which stand out as such to the onlooker.

Some of the means by which climaxes or highlights can be achieved in movement are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4
Some ideas on how climax or highlight might be achieved

ACTION 1. Special emphasis on one or a few actions within the motif through: a. repetition b. enlargement by means of development c. defined by stillness before or after the action/s 2. Change in action content 3. Interesting development or variation through addition of action content	QUALITY 1. Sudden or subtle change of qualities 2. Build up in force or time or both Sudden accents – short continuous dynamic passages 3. Repetition of rhythmic pattern – change of rhythmic pattern 4. Contrast in flow
SPACE 1. Sudden or subtle change or contrast in: a. amount of space used, b. placing in space, c. focus in space, d. space pattern – size, level direction, pathway 2. Special enlargement or development of the spatial aspects of the motif	RELATIONSHIP 1. Variation or contrast of group relationship 2. Addition in number moving Subtraction in number moving 3. Particular juxtapositioning of the movements within the motifs, phrases or sections

Proportion and balance

These are complementary elements of construction. Proportion refers to the size and magnitude of each part in relation to the whole, and balance refers to the equilibrium of content within each of these proportionate parts and the whole.

The proportion of one part of a dance in relation to its other parts has to be right. Equal proportioning of parts may become too boring. It is all too easy to go on developing for too long with one motif or statement or conversely, make too little of a section of movement content thereby losing its significance through lack of repetition. Each part of a dance should be only as long as is necessary. There is no easy answer for a perfect proportion of parts in any dance. It is an intuitive feeling for 'rightness' that guides the use of this element of construction.

Similar comments can be made in reference to balance. Here the composer must be aware of the balance which exists in the *choice* of movement content within one part of the dance in relation to the choice in another. Within the range of material that the composer deems suitable for the total dance, it is important to consider the proportionate use so that the whole is balanced. A beginning 'packed with delights' and then trailing away to an uninteresting end is unbalanced, whereas a dance which has its contrasts, climaxes or highlights, repetitions and variations in movement content spread out throughout its duration may well be judged as a balanced form and should succeed in sustaining interest. The composer's aim is to achieve equilibrium of parts so that a unity becomes apparent. For example, the gentle flowing parts of the dance should not be made insignificant in relation to the strong dominant parts. The section of the dance performed by a soloist should stand as significant in comparison to the section in which a large group performs. All parts must enhance the idea and be inseparable from the whole.

In a more specific sense, the proportion element of construction could refer to how many dancers are performing and the proportionate divisions within the number. The balance element could refer to where they are in relation to each other and the space. (Some detail on this is included in *Methods of construction* 3.) It is important that proportion of numbers is relevant and enhances the dance idea, and that these must change to keep it an interesting feature. Similarly, the balance and placing of the groups in relation to each other have expressive significance. The arrangement and placing of dancers and props in the stage space are governed by a need for symmetric or asymmetric balancing which is

determined by the composer's treatment of the theme. The composer should also consider the proportionate use of the stage space to give a balanced effect within the environment.

Transition

The composer must use this element of construction to link all the parts and effectively create a whole. Transitions are very important and perhaps the most difficult aspects of the composition.

There are no set ways of making transitions from one part of a dance to another. The composer usually works on these in an intuitive way. Finding an answer to a problem of movement can only be achieved by moving through all the possibilities until it feels and looks right.

Transitions can be very short or quite long. Indeed, a transition from one part to another may be effected by merely *holding still* before moving into the new part. This has the effect of holding on to something for a second or two whilst an impression is formed by the audience before changing the subject. Or, the transition may be made as a *hesitation* between movements or phrases or as anticipation of movement to follow – for example, a lean of the body into a direction before actually travelling on that pathway. Transitions hold parts together by bridging and, therefore, help to create the overall rhythmical framework. The longer transition, lasting perhaps as long as a *phrase*, usually acts as a link between sections.

The subtle transitions from one position to another, and the more obvious transitions from one section of the dance to another, all play an important uniting role. Movement tied to movement should be logical, clear and, above all, appear to be easily performed. Movements of a transition between sections should, perhaps, have a lingering flavour of the preceding section and act as an introductory passage to the succeeding section.

Logical development

Logical development becomes apparent by virtue of repetition, climax, transition, contrast and variety in the dance. When we speak of logical development, we refer to the natural growth of the dance from its beginning to its end. If something

is logical it also has meaning and *raison d'être* throughout its existence. The beginning of the dance starts a line of thought for the onlooker and from this, ideas shoot off in many directions, while all retain a common thread. The common thread is the basis upon which logical development depends, and is more than just the idea, story or motivational stimulus of the dance. The common thread is initiated through the beginning motif which is a *movement interpretation* of the motivation or idea behind the dance. This movement interpretation has an identity in terms of action, qualities, space and perhaps relationships. The rest of the dance, or a part of the dance, discloses more of this identity through repetition, variation and contrast. The pursuit of form created from the identity of the foundational motifs determines logical development. In this way all the movements appear relevant and part of the growth of the dance. The climaxes are in the right places and have the right kind of initiation to fulfil their purpose. The whole leads perfectly to its end which seems right as an outcome. Not inevitable, but right. In fact the end of a dance is probably the most important part. If the end fails – the dance fails.

To summarise: logical development of the dance ensures unification whereby each part is linked to the common thread through the composer's interpretation of the idea. If the constructional elements of motifs, developments, variations, contrasts, climaxes or highlights, and above all transitions, are successfully employed, then the dance appears to have a logical development which in turn produces unity.

Unity

This is the overall constructional element. The final shape that emerges when the dance is over is realised through unity. To make an analogy: if all the parts fit into the jigsaw puzzle it finally produces a whole picture within its round or square frame. The movement content with its inherent meaning and the way in which the constructional elements have been employed form the pieces of the jigsaw and its overall shape or dance form (eg. ternary form) forms the frame. The pieces knitted together become unified within the frame and also form the frame which produces unity. If even one piece is missing or does not fit then the whole never becomes a whole and unity is lost.

The dance composer must aim for unity. To understand how it is reached in

a dance requires a good deal of experience and artistic awareness, but it can be recognised by laymen and even by children. Somehow a good dance is appreciated as an entity which has meaning and significance beyond the scope of its pieces. A dance which has the quality of unity is likely to be successful.

Methods of construction 6

Style

Understanding the term ‘style’

In dance, the terms style and technique can mean the same thing because the word technique often means the content of the idiom, not merely how it is manipulated/presented. Thus we have ballet, jazz, contemporary techniques which produce these particular styles. For some, use of the word genre to describe the idiom or type of dance – ballet, jazz, contemporary – provides a solution since each can be articulated in many stylistic flavours. For example, a contemporary dance might be labelled jazzy in style, balletic or neo-classical, ethnic or as having a particular social dance flavour.

The word technique is also used in most dance contexts when discussing physical skill and, to a dancer, technique means acquiring skill through attending class, exercising the body and practising movements to achieve perfection. The class invariably is taken in a specific technique, ie, to become skilled in ballet one goes to ballet classes. So at class level, the words technique and style often do mean the same thing. Genre is a word which is not in common usage in dance.

It is interesting to study how new techniques, or changes of emphasis in traditional techniques, form particular styles. All choreographers try to invent new styles and even if a traditional style is used, rather than merely rearranging the prescribed content, the choreographer will probably take elements from the traditional style and embrace them within a style more relevant to the choreographer's own time.

Balanchine, as an example of a master classicist, abstracted the pure classical syntax of movement from ballet and developed it into modern-formalism. This term describes a style which has been created through a process of abstraction. From the traditional theatrical spectacle of ballet, Balanchine abstracted the ‘bare-bones’ austerity of ballet essence. In exploring the essence of ballet, Balanchine

concentrated on the movement itself and particularly concerned himself with the phenomenon of grace. Technique was the means by which his dancers achieved the essential grace which, for Balanchine, was the essence of ballet. His particular ways of moving into and out of ballet positions and his linking of movements created his style. His manipulation of the standardised technical elements of ballet was the outcome of a mixture of experiences – those early in his life in St Petersburg and with the Diaghilev company, those connected with twentieth-century modern expressionist dance styles and those connected with modern art in general and music in particular. Furthermore, the general style of American dancers with its broad, expansive and energetic characteristics similarly influenced his movement repertoire. All these influences, and doubtless others, became absorbed into a coherent Balanchine style.

Balanchine's ballets are prime examples of the changes in emphasis in ballet technique in that legs are extended very high, there is an accent on line and fluency, the torso is used to tip the body into and out of balances and the aspect of body design or shape is an apparent focus throughout his work to generate the quality of grace for its own sake. The style, therefore expresses grace, the technique or content with its emphasis on line, shape, balance, etc., and the choreographic form with an emphasis on order, harmony and a pleasingly unified appearance, create the style of modern-formalism. Modern, because it is a twentieth-century development of a traditional style, and formalism, because it focuses on form and movement for their own sake.

Factors affecting the style of a dance

From the above brief discussion of Balanchine's style, it would appear relevant, in summary, to say that style is culturally and historically defined but, in dance as in other arts, it also has much to do with the technique employed. Martha Graham's work is a clear example of how technique forms the basis of style and expression in dance and how this is formulated out of a need to find ways of expressing in a manner relevant to the time and place in which the art form finds itself.

Martha Graham's technique evolved first as a means of:

*expressing personal feelings and national identity through
recognisable prototypes of character and movement and the*

abstraction of those feelings to a more cosmic level through the use of symbol, myth and psychoanalytic exploration.

(Seigel, 1979, pp. 175–6)

This stylised naturalism was typical of the 1930s when Graham first started to choreograph. In a Graham dance people make statements. Most often these are dramatic and powerful. To effect this Graham's theatre dance style is distinguished by its unnaturalness. As Seigel says, 'Graham has always tried to formalise natural impulses, to abstract human feelings into a set expressive language'. This procedure was common in the 1930s when Freudian theory encouraged artists to explore new ways of expressing human feelings. As Jowitt states:

Graham likened herself, at a primitive stage in her development, to the dancer in a primitive culture . . . She would start from scratch, concentrating on the pulse of the body, on the rhythmic action of the foot against the ground, and articulate the head, arms and hands as her work evolved . . . breath was crucial – not so much everyday even-rhythmed breathing, but the gasp, the sob, the slow sigh of relief, and the ways in which these – heightened and abstracted – could affect the dancer's muscles and skeleton. Her theory of 'contraction and release' was built on the act of inhaling and exhaling. The dancer, whether sitting, standing, kneeling or lying down, caves in as if suddenly hit with a blow to the center of her body. But 'caves in' is the wrong term if that implies any relaxation of tension . . . As Graham developed her technique, a contraction might hit the dancer sideways, make her twist, spiral, or be spun to the floor. It might attack percussively then deepen slowly, resonating throughout her body. But always, no matter how drastic the fall, there is release, a rise, an advance, an inhalation. The dancer waits – poised, charged – for the next crisis.

(1988, pp. 164, 166)

Ideas like these created very individual styles of dance movement. Certainly, the Graham technique is idiosyncratic and as demanding and unnatural as classical ballet. However, the style and kind of expression most characteristic of Graham's work seem no longer relevant to today's choreographers so the contemporary techniques used in dance works, though frequently derived from Graham's technique, have changed. It is interesting to note the similarity between ballet and contemporary dance here, in that it is common practice to take Graham classes, learning the Graham specified expressive language and perfecting a whole range of unnatural movement content and yet, in the performance of choreographers' works, never to use these movements in their original form. Hence, we see a definite division between the style of what is taught in technique class and what is required on stage. (It is acknowledged that the body is superbly tuned and prepared for any dance co-ordination by virtue of the practice of Graham technique, but if the term technique refers to content for dance, the actual movement content is no longer relevantly expressive for today's choreographers.) Yet, the style of Graham's work remains, in essence, the hallmark of most of the contemporary theatre dance available to us. The styles of Graham, Cunningham and a few other early modern dance artists have become integrated and generalised to serve the needs of present-day choreographers.

This generalised contemporary dance style includes movements emphasising the use of the torso, feet in parallel, concentration on body design and spatial design, movements of isolated parts of the body as well as the whole, emphasis on the pelvic region and the centre initiating and causing momentum, tension between up and down, floor-work and extensive variations of qualities and phrasing. The dance composer, through study of contemporary dance works on video or preferably in live theatre settings, will absorb the flavour of this generalised contemporary dance style and employ it as a basic stylistic source for their own dances.

Another important feature of the generalised style in mainstream dance choreography is the use of symbolic action embedded in a unified whole. This can be illustrated by reference to Jiri Kylian's work. In his dances based upon ideas the symbols are not literal and referential. The image is abstract and subtle in meaning. But his style of symbolising a theme is also very much integrated with his style of forming a dance and it is this aspect of his choreography which is masterful. One becomes delighted by the build-up, integration and development

of motifs; the inventive way in which they are repeated within intricate patternings; the excitement of choreographic devices, such as canon, perfectly placed to make important moments stay in the mind long after the dance is over; the intricacy, fluency and grace of the couples weaving around, over, through, towards and away from each other creating particularly pleasing spatial and rhythmic nuances. These are some of the ways in which Kylian's personal style becomes evident and some of the reasons why his works also, like Balanchine's, can be labelled as modern-formalism.

There is a recognisable look to Kylian's work as there is to Balanchine's and Graham's. Kylian, like other choreographers, attempts to move away from any such trademark. He said, 'I prefer to think I didn't have a style. I like to change my ways from ballet to ballet, but of course, you cannot avoid your own handwriting' (reported by Anna Kisselgoff writing in the *New York Times*, 1979).

So far then, in the contemporary dance context we have the current generalised dance technique style, the ways in which ideas are presented symbolically with a concentration on stripping away the dramatic literal gesture content to create subtle hints of the idea, and an emphasis on the form aspects of composition, all contributing to the overall style of dances. Added to this list, the following factors also affect style.

Each theme has stylistic properties intrinsic to it. For example, in Bruce's *Berlin Requiem*, 1982, we see the styles of the 1930s' dance forms, characteristic poses and behaviours of the bar-frequenting social group, amalgamated with some movement characteristics of the films of the period. To embody the expression, these stylistic aspects of the theme are inextricably interwoven with a contemporary dance style and approaches to choreography as listed above. But, since Bruce has done the amalgamating and weaving of the parts into a unified whole, the result carries a powerful Bruce signature.

Hence, it appears that the style and expression of a dance work are likely to emerge as a compound of several elements, each of which has boundaries. The technique and kind (genre) of dance set one boundary. Added to these we have the personal style of the choreographer pervading the work. This comes over as a personal interpretation and way of using the technique, together with a personal interpretation of the idea and the conventions and meanings associated with it. So, we have the possibility of style within style, within style.

Yet another stylistic boundary derives from the current views on dance as a

theatre art and the choreographer's attitude towards these. Clearly, both Bruce and Kylian are what might be labelled 'mainstream' choreographers – they use highly skilled dancers, they generally have themes to dance about, they create symbols abstracting the essence of the idea. Kylian concentrates on sheer dance quality, the theme being instrumental to this, while Bruce gives greater emphasis to the emotional impact of the theme. But both aim for unity of form. They present the dance works so that the audiences can enjoy the intrinsic qualities of good dancing: line, shape, pattern, dynamic contrasts, etc. Kylian emphasises formalism and the physical side of it, Bruce emphasises expressionism, but clearly both adhere to the mainstream view of dance.

Contrary to this, we have the post-modern or 'new dance' exponents who have formulated different views of dance as art. Here, the outcome is dependent upon how they see dance: as unconnected or fragmented movements in time and space; as mathematically organised movement in time and space; as natural everyday action for its own sake; as a spontaneous response to commands or improvised movement of others; as informed happenings; as exposure of social behaviours through realistic physical contact and body language which might otherwise be confined to private relationships (eg, the DV8 Physical Theatre). However, these are not the only characteristics which result in these choreographers being collectively called post-moderns. In addition, they share characteristics such as the manner of working choreographically – by experimentation with little concern for rules or conventions – and the movement content – mostly natural, relaxed and showing little concern for shape, placement or focus in space and technically complex patterns of movement. These are some of the distinguishing features of the post-modern style/genre. Further in-depth discussion of post-modern/new dance can be found in *Methods of construction* 8.

How to stylise a dance

It is obvious, then, that the complexity of the concept of style demands that a composer understands what is involved in stylising a dance and that it cannot be left to chance if the dance is going to make an impact and to stand the test of time. While these might appear grandiose ideals for a student composer, it is always necessary to aim for originality if the created dance is to be valued.

Copying the style of a known choreographer can be a useful learning process but ultimately, even if a dance is composed 'in the style of . . .', it should bear the distinctive signature of the composer. No two people have exactly the same backgrounds, even if trained at the same time and in the same place they will perceive things differently because of their own different experiences. Moreover, interpretation of themes, use of techniques in movement and compositional form will vary from person to person. This is what is so special about art – each person's work is distinctive. Style is one of the features which makes for this distinction but it is also influenced by the cultural and artistic practices of particular times and places. It is the understanding of these practices that the student composer needs to develop so that the dances composed achieve both artistic relevance and originality.

The range and complexity of expression in dance today demand a complex mixing of tried and tested techniques and styles, and a constant search for new ones. For example, a theme may require a social/contemporary dance style such as Twyla Tharp's *Sinatra Suite* (1977), a neo-classical style such as Jiri Kylian's *Sinfonietta* (1979), a physical theatre/contact improvisation style such as DV8's *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* (1988), an ethnically influenced style such as Christopher Bruce's *Ghost Dances* (1981). Whatever the theme the composer needs to research all aspects of its time/place, ie, the cultural characteristics, and search for the most appropriate technique/content and choreographic approach to express it. To do this it might be helpful to study ways in which the theme has been expressed before, if it has, so that the composer's choice of style is informed.

An ability to make such decisions implies a vast knowledge of techniques and styles and, of course, student composers do not often have more than one technique in their repertoire with its intrinsic style, be it ballet, contemporary or jazz, for example. In education, there is insufficient time to train young dancers to achieve mastery of skill in even one technique and it would be wrong to do this anyway because it immediately limits the style and kinds of expression to those which that particular technique can articulate. All techniques have such limitations.

It would seem that, in an ideal world, pupils in school and college should come to understand the significant differences in expression in a number of tried and tested techniques and styles so that they may selectively employ the right combinations of these in their own creative endeavours. Resource-based

teaching/learning, the subject of the Sections 4 and 5 in this book, is in my view the best way forward. A study of current and past repertoire of dance art works in the composer's own culture and outside it, too, has to be the means towards the end of developing an understanding of style and how to stylise a dance. This is how musicians learn about style – through listening to, studying and playing renowned pieces. Dance composers also need to work in this way – watch, study and perform snippets from dance works choreographed by professionals.

Methods of construction 7

Improvisation in the process of composition

Meaning of terms – improvisation and exploration

First, it is important to discuss the meaning of the term improvisation and its relationship with the term exploration which is used frequently in this book. The latter is defined as a systematic investigation, examination, study, search with a view to making specific discoveries and learning about something. Improvisation, however, is defined here as invention without preparation, to execute spontaneously in an impromptu or unforeseen way.

It would seem, however, that the dance community uses the term improvisation to cover the range of activity encapsulated in both these definitions. Mackrell (1992) in describing Butcher's *Landings* (1976), for example, states that:

A lot of the movement was improvised in performance, though the structure of the piece was very carefully set. (p. 71)

Within the confines of the above definition, it might not be appropriate to describe this as true improvisation because the performer cannot respond entirely spontaneously; freedom is limited within a tightly structured piece.

Improvisation true to the definition above has been ascribed to the work of the X6 Collective by Jordan (1992):

A strand of quiet, 'spiritual' work was made for a single showing . . . perhaps . . . as an opposition to the accreditable, repeatable

products associated with establishment dance. Improvisation could be seen as directly oppositional in this sense. Here, in some cases, pleasure for the audience lay primarily in following the process of a performer's spontaneous response to the situation.

(p. 74)

Although, in comparison with the former, the latter example fits the definition of improvisation well, the term improvisation is used, in practice, in both and perhaps quite rightly so. After all, jazz musicians improvise when they create numerous variations on the original musical theme in their breaks and the original constitutes tight structure.

The term exploration is clearly not appropriate here or in Mackrell's discussion of Butcher's work because the improvised actions are occurring in performance, in real time, when it is not appropriate to undertake a systematic search. Rather the dancer/musician lets imagination and spontaneity of response to the given structure take off in impromptu, unforeseen ways. The immediacy of performance makes a difference here. Conversely, one does not say that a visual artist is improvising with representation. The term exploration is fully appropriate in this case as it may be in the other non-temporal arts where there is time to consider and to explore different ideas before selection. But we are discussing the process here, not the product.

In this process, of course, the choreographer, playwright or music composer explores and selects in this way to arrive at a final product. In the context of dance composition, Section 1 of this book focused on *exploration* as systematic searching for movement material with consideration of the possible implicit meanings. It is difficult to say exactly when the process of exploration becomes improvisation because exploration of an idea or range of movements is often effected *through* improvisation to examine the potential, to try out and feel practically, what is right.

However, the Mackrell and Jordan quotations above were not focused on the process of composing but on the products or dance compositions themselves. Clearly, improvisation occurs both in the process and in some products, and it varies from being an open, free, spontaneous response in movement to a more limited, framed and yet individual interpretation within a given structure. Hence, a broader definition of the term improvisation is needed in a dance context.

In Section 2, *Methods of construction 1*, such a broader definition was introduced in that the concept is described as ‘varying between free and limited improvisation’. Here improvisation was discussed as a starting strategy in composition and ideas were offered on how movement might be selected from improvisation to structure the initial motif(s) for the dance. It was also proposed that this selection might be guided by feeling (intuition), or by a process of objective evaluation through application of knowledge of the craft of composition. This consideration of improvisation led to the beginnings of composition (see page 37). However, improvisation is an ongoing process throughout the act of composing a dance.

This chapter therefore develops the concepts introduced earlier and then discusses possible roles for improvisation in the process of composition.

Free and limited improvisation

The concepts of abandonment, of loss of directed thought, of free-flight imaginative indulgence are conjured up when one thinks of free and spontaneous improvisation. It seems to emerge from the sub-conscious levels, from a kind of trance-like immersion in feeling. Movement seems unstructured, open and uninhibited. Such improvisations produce new/fresh movements or treatments of themes. Yet like flights of fancy when half awake, it is not easy to recapture or remember the outcomes of free improvisations for composition purposes.

As soon as directed conscious thought comes into play, the improvisation becomes less free. Maybe this occurs most of the time in that compositions usually emerge from researched ideas for dances with perhaps some of the parameters clarified such as the accompanying music, the style, the storyline. Whatever is already in place, the structure has begun to take shape and improvisation is undertaken with some ideas, even if vague, as to what is appropriate for the dance.

So perhaps there is not so much an either/or about improvisation for dance composition – either free or limited – but that ninety-five per cent falls into the category of limited improvisation and that the degrees of limitation vary from very little to a great deal.

On the other hand, all composers should experience improvisation towards

the free end of the continuum and the accompanying sense of immersion in some way. Even if guided only by music (which of course puts limitation on it), the enriching effect of such liberation and lack of restraint will, in my view, have beneficial effects upon subsequent compositions, perhaps after a fair amount of time. Such experiences, often full of feeling, somehow feed intuition and provide movement answers to problems in what might be described as insightful moments. This might be a flawed argument philosophically, but my experience has shown that some very original ideas come to the surface in free improvisation and they are not always lost in the memory's sub-conscious. A sensation or association of feeling with a certain movement idea can create clues as to the original improvised actions and, after work has been done on them, they might become realised and set into the composition. This might be described as moving from feeling to knowing – from spontaneity to discriminating selection. Hence, students should attempt to engage in free improvisation from time to time if only as a means of permitting imagination to fly and the unexpected movement to emerge. Some ways of experiencing this might be as follows.

a. Concentration on imagined feelings, emotions or situations as the starting points for improvisation might be achieved if the students start by lying on the floor relaxed with eyes closed, and the teacher tells a story, full of potential movement responses. Students should allow the images to form and flow freely in their minds while the teacher takes them deeply into the feelings. In empathy with the feelings, the images will be movement based because the story has been especially selected to evoke movement responses. The latter, however, should be achieved only by concentration on the feelings. There can be no suggestions about the movement outcomes since these should emerge without constraints on the students.

Students might listen to a passage of text about a political prisoner's ordeals and feelings during imprisonment (eg, John McCarthy's). They should be invited to move when they feel inclined to or hold a still position in relation to their feelings about the story. The students will be led to concentrate fully on McCarthy's feeling of weight on his body with the ceilings and walls closing down and in on him, of fearful claustrophobia and sheer helplessness when gagged in a sack in the boot of a car – like a small baby, totally dependent on others to serve his needs. The story might continue with McCarthy's feeling of false joy

when released from the confined car boot and the taped gagging, only to be thrown into a bare concrete cell. Throughout the story students should be focusing inwards and, when they move, the truth in their feelings should be apparent. If this is not the case, free improvisation has not occurred.

The next step might be to recall and develop some of the movement responses effected during the free improvisation and build ideas from these. This then shifts from free into limited improvisation.

b. It could be argued that the above is not really free improvisation since the story limits the outcome. Perhaps the only way of getting into truly free improvisation is just to move in silence. This is not easy in a class since the students are bound to affect and infect each other as they move. However, a more experienced dance composer can beneficially work alone in this way. At first, no doubt, the same old movements will emerge but given time, patience and some taking of risks, new variations or combinations of these will develop too. It might be likened to a purging of oneself of old and clichéd vocabulary until something fresh and different becomes evident. From these movements, which could be described as distantly related to the composer's vocabulary, there might be a few totally new movement ideas. Given a creative composer, these ideas may spark off yet more new movements.

The teacher can play an important role in the process of using such improvisations as a basis for composition. An observed 'lovely moment there – try to remember it, Michael' and similar encouraging comments addressing different members of the group might help students to note the imaginative, fleeting moments.

The next step might be to recall, then link these movements to emotions or ideas to find expressive potential. This association will probably drive the improvisation forward in a more structured way by virtue of limitations imposed by the idea. Even if there is no associated feeling or idea, the abstract movement content emerging from the free improvisation will put boundaries on subsequent movement ideas. The range of associations needs somehow to be explored before the movement idea is abandoned.

Rather than sacrificing this free improvisation for a more limited form which is bound to occur in any one on-going session, it might be wise to leave gaps of time between free improvisations so that a freshness of approach in producing

new movements is achieved each time. Whatever the process here, new movement content should be the outcome and this points to the real value of free improvisation for all dance composers.

Limited improvisation, as stated above, is the more usual approach in dance composition. Here, in my view, creativity can be greater than in a free improvisation situation because, with boundaries defined, there seems to be more depth to penetrate. This brings to mind the old maxim that total freedom is no freedom at all, but it also suggests that such a view is contradictory in the light of the above discussion on the value of free improvisation. Perhaps it is a matter of experience. Beginner dancers and composers may feel very inhibited by a total freedom and will often not be able to move at all, whereas more experienced dancers at least have learned vocabularies of dance movement from which to start. On the other hand, a clean slate or lack of preconceived ideas can permit more freedom. It is difficult to be certain as to the benefits of extreme freedom for beginner dance composers since some can let go without inhibition and produce very fresh, interesting movements untied to any techniques, whilst others cannot get through a self-conscious barrier. Perhaps the teacher in this case should open up opportunities for free improvisation but be ready to put limitations in place should the students seem lost as to what to do.

Beginner composers can learn how to improvise and therefore gain confidence if they are set strict limitations. An example of this might be as follows, but it is interesting to note that the act of improvising is described as exploring.

Exploration of individual actions – sway, sweep, swing, pull, toss, swirl, rock, knock, fall and roll, and qualities such as accelerate, decelerate, accent, freely go, suddenly stop – could lead to the making of phrases using ‘commas’ and ‘full stops’ to depict images of gusts of wind at various strengths. Each exploration requires improvisation so new and various ways of throwing, for example, are experienced.

The improvisation at first is restricted only by interpretation of each movement concept. In my experience, it is wise to keep students unaware of the dance outcome (the gusts of wind) or they may limit their responses to their preconceptions of how, in this case, the wind might be depicted. Improvisation becomes restricted as soon as this idea is presented but the already identified action and qualitative content in the above example should be free of clichéd associations and will be much broader and perhaps more original than it would have been if the wind image were to be imparted from the outset.

A development of this improvisation task could lead to the exploration of the use of the above concepts in partner relationships and then further partner movements could be explored and improvised by one of the pair manipulating the other in movements such as pulling, pushing, wrapping, leaning over/on. A duo expressing movement of the wind could result from such structured improvisations.

An extension of this work could result in adaptations made to the wind duo so that selected movements from it are developed and varied for a different but related expressive purpose. In this context, students could be given alternative themes to choose from, such as an argument, parent/child relationship or war. With a number of choices in accompaniment such as poetry, music and sound effects, students will need to improvise various extensions and adaptations of their ready-made motifs to find appropriate and original content for their compositions.

This method of guiding improvisation towards a rich and interesting outcome might well serve as an approach in the choreographic process of individual choreographers. In this case, as with the teacher cited above, the composer could lead dancers into improvisations having brainstormed ways in which the theme of conflict might be explored. The method of identifying analogous situations such as the wind or stormy weather will often work well to produce imaginative improvised movement responses which can then be manipulated by the composer.

The above example begins as a tightly limited improvisation in that each movement concept sets a very restricted boundary. It then opens up to allow the students greater imaginative freedom in responding to the ideas of wind and relationship conflicts respectively. Clearly, the role of improvisation in the exploratory processes of composition is important from start to finish.

Improvisation in framework compositions

This methodology in dance composition is presented as a teaching device in *The Art of Dance in Education* (1994, 2002) but it is also a very appropriate method for composers who wish to employ their dancers as creative contributors to dance works. Indeed some professional choreographers use this method exclusively. The central concept here is reiterated as follows:

a dance framework is a composed structure for a dance denoting what kind of movement [will be featured] in each section, the order of the sections and how these relate to make a whole dance. The [dancers] fill in the detail of the movement content in their own way. . . . A well-made . . . dance framework has a clear beginning, middle and end, contains variety and contrast, develops logically and achieves coherence of form.

(Smith-Autard, 2002, pp. 72–3)

Here the composer has interpreted the theme and has an imagined dance in mind. The dance movements will derive from *framework tasks* given to the dancers and these will provoke improvisation limited to the composer's interpretation of the theme. For example, a duo about changing relationships over time might be structured as follows:

Section 1	meeting and participating in youthful innocent, playfulness
Section 2	becoming dependent on each other and developing a close loving relationship
Section 3	in separation by distance growing away from each other in lifestyle, thoughts and feelings
Section 4	together again but in conflict
Section 5	resolution – parting or not?

Each of the above sections would be imagined and worked on by the composer so that an *outline* of dance content could be used as framework tasks. This might be achieved on paper or through the composer physically improvising and trying out ideas to discern the movement concepts to be presented to the dancers. For the beginning of Section 1 for example, the dancers could be led into exploration of travelling actions to meet, hold momentarily and let go in a variety of ways depicting a playful mood. The dancers would improvise within the limitations set and in this way provide the composer with live and moving explorations of the movements to depict the idea. From these explorations the composer would select and subsequently set the content for this part of the dance.

The dance framework, therefore, becomes the outer structure within which there are many inner structures (framework tasks). The dancers could be contributors to all or parts of the structures making up the dance. Indeed, they may contribute to the devising process of the overall dance framework as well as to the parts as described above. Here at the outset, when brainstorming and discussing an idea for a dance, improvisation of content can occur in an imagined form. In whatever way the dancers are engaged in the process of composing the dance, improvisation and exploration, either physically or mentally, are the means to the end.

As indicated above, creating a dance framework means setting a range of exploratory improvisation tasks. A teacher of beginner composers could use this method to help the students learn how to improvise within limitations as exemplified above. However, in my view, it is most helpful to all composers to learn the methodology itself. Understanding what a framework composition is can be likened to understanding how to plan an essay or storyboard a film. To identify a structure for the dance overall and the elements within it helps to clarify how students could structure their own improvisation tasks. This activity could be undertaken in collaboration with other student dancers or alone.

A dance framework, then, defines the boundaries for improvisation. How to use the improvisation that results from the response to a framework task is considered below.

Guiding improvisation visually

This method of structuring improvisation for composition either from ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the piece, is often employed in group choreography.

In the first instance, the dancers might work collectively. This could possibly be categorised as free, spontaneous and unlimited improvisation in that each individual does not know what the others are going to do and therefore has to react instantaneously. Like a conversation in movement, limitations are apparent of course, because responses depend upon what is ‘said’ first and a logical picking up of ideas between dancers will occur. However, as in conversations, there can always be a complete change of topic or idea. Dancers engaged in group improvisation often find new, inspiring departures from their own movement responses when they are forced to do so by the way in which others

move. This will not occur, however, if the group is always working together. Hence the wisdom of seeking and adding new people for group improvisation experiences.

Improvisation in a group is generally guided visually by how dancers respond to what they perceive in others' movements. But just which aspects are picked up on is entirely the responding dancer's decision. It may be the type of action and speed or rhythm of the movement, its pathway and direction or the force and dynamic qualities. One or more of these elements could be replicated, extended and developed in the response or used as a basis for contrast to present an opposing point of view.

Sometimes, however, and especially in contact improvisation contexts, the improvisation is guided not so much visually but by touch or bodily contact between dancers. Here, letting the movement come in the giving and taking of weight, in being manipulated and manipulating others in relaxed but controlled situations in which the lead shifts from one person to another without verbal communication, can lead to some very interesting duo and group movement ideas.

Such improvisations may also be guided and inspired by a composer standing 'outside' the group. Many professional choreographers work this way. Here, the composer has a visual moving canvas on which different directions for the choreography can be traced, even if it has been predesigned into a framework composition. Here the composer will have set the task and so the constraints or limitations on the dancers will be defined. The composer viewing the ongoing improvisation can either mentally register what is going on or verbally comment on it. The latter might be in the form of requests to the dancers to repeat or extend the movement ideas or suggestions of alternative ideas to push the improvisation forwards in different ways.

Whether composing from the 'inside' or 'outside' of the dance, the next step, of course, is to recall, select and establish movement ideas for the composition from the improvisation. The dancers may be required to recall some of the most significant moments for them, or the composer will indicate which aspects they should work on. Another way of working is to use video to capture the creative moments.

A great advantage in working from the outside is the fact that *relationships* between the dancers can be seen and moments of, for example, complementary,

contrasting or overlapping canon in movement, could be identified and refined for the composition.

Guiding improvisation visually, even for a soloist by use of mirrors or a video, can be a very exciting and dynamic event. However, it is very unlikely that composition will emerge unless some ideas have been structured or discussed beforehand. Group improvisation might well be beneficial for its own sake, but when it is used as a means to a composed dance, there should be guidelines to determine the ways in which the outcomes will be used or adapted for the composition or discarded. Framework compositions, discussed earlier, may well prove to be most useful guidelines in this regard.

Improvisation as process in composition

Most of the above text has been concerned with improvisation in the context of the preliminary exploratory work or search for starting points which might initiate composition. The diagram at the end of *Methods of construction 1*, however, indicates that improvisation is likely to have a role throughout the composing of a dance. Perhaps it is in this context that it is more appropriate to use the term exploration to describe the process of manipulating and adapting the already selected movements to create further material by making developments, variations and/or contrasting passages. The definition of exploration offered at the beginning of this chapter suggests that this is a wholly intellectual process. In my view, this is not the case.

Exploring a range of possible outcomes from a given set of movements requires imaginative, intuitive 'letting go' in improvisation to achieve a richness and originality of outcome. Somehow the composer has to 'get inside' and absorb fully the part of the dance already made and then allow subsequent movements to relate to the original through an intuitive sense of developing form. This is why composers often repeat the first section or the part of the dance already composed to produce some new ideas for the next part. A feel for logical progression and relatedness of the new to the old will often emerge through this process.

Exploration through improvisation probably occurs throughout the process of composing. It is the means of driving the composition into new directions and the composer may find moments of insight to produce original progressions in the developing dance.

The role of evaluation in improvisation

From the above it is clear that improvisation can be about taking risks, abandoning rules and guidelines to arrive at free and unrestricted responses. Nonetheless, however unrestrained it is, if it is to be used in any way for composition purposes, there is always an element of evaluation taking place. This will lead to decisions to select particular movements from the improvisations which seem appropriate to the idea for the dance and a discarding of those that do not. The selection and adaptation of movements is reached through evaluation of the appropriateness and originality they are judged to have in the context of the composition and original motivations for the dance. In this way, evaluation acts as a moderating, guiding influence on the improvisation, providing a means of achieving an overall holding form.

It is difficult for young and inexperienced composers to find a balance between 'letting go' and 'holding on' to the rules or guidelines of the discipline of dance composition. The process of evaluation at first requires objective application of knowledge of principles of form, for example, so that understanding of the concepts is developed. Hence, much of the evaluation of improvisation is likely to take place as a class activity where discussion of the relevance of improvised outcomes can lead to knowledge and understanding of the criteria governing emerging forms. To learn how to view and evaluate the improvisation of others is extremely valuable. Here, the teacher can help by reminding students of the task and the idea for the dance on the one hand and compositional principles previously studied on the other. Guiding the viewer's perceptions through questions on worksheets which require written responses might be a way of developing reflective evaluations. But it would probably be necessary to video the improvisation for this activity since beginner students will remember very little from one improvisation. To repeat it physically is self-defeating, of course.

Sometimes, however, the evaluative responses should be verbal and immediate both from the performers and viewers. Little moments of imaginative improvisation may otherwise be lost in the process of too much thinking (especially if they have not been captured on video). Immediate responses are likely to be derived more from feeling the sensations of moving or from viewing the movements of others or oneself with the aid of a mirror; they can often lead to observation and evaluation of fresh and inspired moments.

More experienced composers will probably evaluate the improvisations

through informed intuitive responses – sensing or feeling what is right. Whether experienced or not, however, they should not underestimate the importance of evaluating improvisation for the purpose of composition. Hence, the more improvisation experienced and the more professional dance seen, the greater the knowledge gained to inform evaluation. A gradual shift from objectively applied knowledge to a more intuitive guiding of evaluation will take place as experience grows.

To conclude

This chapter has discussed in detail some approaches to improvisation because of its importance in a comprehensive course in dance composition. It is placed here at the end of Section 2 as a corollary because, as made clear above, improvisation as a process towards composition requires evaluation and this is informed through the practice of composition and learning about its underpinning principles and conventions.

Although improvisation can be experienced as a process in its own right, this chapter has, for obvious reasons, placed emphasis on its role in composition. Improvisation, however, became more significant in late twentieth-century new or experimental dance contexts and continues to be a *modus operandi* in the new millennium. Some of these contexts and ways in which improvisation features, are discussed in the following chapter.

Methods of construction 8

Alternative and experimental approaches in dance composition

The purpose of this chapter is not to expose the theories or histories behind the various forms of new or post-modern dance. Rather, it concentrates on three defining and distinctive characteristics distilled from the study of a range of professional examples and demonstrates how student dance composers can employ some of the variations within them to extend and vary their own composition techniques.

Meaning of terms

Attempts to define the meaning of the terms used to label alternative and experimental approaches to dance composition are fraught with difficulty. In the professional world of dance, these approaches allegedly began in the 1960s at the Judson Memorial Church in New York (Jordan, 1992). The label post-modern was used at this time by the dance practitioners themselves, and it has been confirmed by writers such as Sally Banes in *Terpsichore in Sneakers*, first published in 1980 with a second edition in 1987. In Britain, the term new dance has been coined for the experimental practice extending from the early 1960s to the present day. So both labels seem to be appropriate in describing alternative and experimental work which takes different directions in relation to mainstream modern or contemporary dance. There is no single approach and no one set of ideas. Rather, as Mackrell (1992) states in the context of British new dance:

It is a revolution which has been partly about choreographic experiment and partly about altering the way people think about dance . . . It is a movement which has been fuelled by political

and artistic ideas, all of which have helped to shape the dance scene as we know it today. (p. 1)

Clearly, experimentation is one factor common to the various approaches. However, reflection on reading in this area, numerous viewings and practical engagement in such diversity, lead to a classification and characterisation of such practices under three headings:

1. alternative movement contents and eclectic trends
2. different themes and readings of the themes
3. alternative and experimental approaches to dance composition

The means towards these ends are generally experimental in that exponents consciously break 'rules' of past practices and develop new 'vocabularies', 'rules' or 'methods' which characterise their work. Since these dance makers usually work as individuals, there are as many variations of practice as practitioners. Hence the difficulty of marshalling such idiosyncratic approaches under one label.

Alternative movement contents and eclectic trends

Alternative to what? might be the first question the reader asks. Throughout this book there has been an underlying assumption that dance composition students should not be restricted in the choice of content to one or even two pre-formulated dance techniques such as ballet, Graham or Cunningham. Indeed, Section 1 of this book advised that students should become knowledgeable about an open framework within which they might explore and discover movement content for themselves. The framework proposed was synthesised by Laban having studied natural movement in different contexts. Although the creative approach allied to Laban's principles has been superseded by the 'art of dance' approach (see Smith-Autard, 1994, 2002), thirty four years on from the first publication of this book, it is maintained that the principles outlined by Laban and summarised on page 19 in this book, are still valid frames of reference for students in creative invention of their own dance contents.

Conversely, learning how to stylise movement content through an

understanding of particular techniques such as those of Graham, Hawkins and Humphrey, or ballet, jazz and social dance forms, also constitutes an important part of the discipline of dance composition. Hence the discussion in *Methods of construction* 6.

Clearly then, both the creative open framework and technique-based approach, should be experienced in building up a vocabulary of movement for dance content. (This is proposed and discussed further in Smith-Autard, 1994, 2002, pp. 18–23).

In both that and this book, however, there is an emphasis on learning from professional art works and it is through the study of new or post-modern dance exponents of the last fifty or so years, that we see the emergence of a whole range of new dance contents which are gradually replacing or merging with the older, established and conventional techniques. It is this new range of contents emerging from experimental approaches to movement for dance composition that is the focus here.

One of these new vocabularies, becoming increasingly dominant in contemporary dance today, even in more mainstream choreography, is Contact Improvisation. This is supported by Matheson (1992) who claims that:

Paxton – a former Cunningham dancer . . . was instrumental in the creation of Contact Improvisation in 1972. This duet form, with its roots in a variety of disciplines including wrestling and martial arts has a worldwide network of participants . . . Many young choreographers have incorporated the principles, vocabulary and partnering techniques of Contact Improvisation into their dances.

(pp. 217–8)

Contact Improvisation, as the name implies, is improvisation, mostly in duo form (though larger numbers can engage in it when experienced) to create close contact movement ‘conversations’. Movements such as leaning on, rolling over, lifting, pushing, pulling, balancing on, wrapping round, tipping or throwing off and catching are employed in a variety of relationship contexts. The partners initiate or follow each other’s movements; this produces a fluid, ongoing movement improvisation.

The movements can be violent and aggressive or gentle and caring. Whatever

the expression, there has to be a relaxed giving into and taking of each other's weight so the focus is inward rather than directed at an audience and the movement is natural rather than extended. Moreover, in moving around, under, through, over, in close, away from each other and fluently going with the momentum, there is likely to be much change of direction and bodily shaping of the pair and very little concern for line or sense of front. Hence the 'rules' governing conventional presentation are not important any more and new principles emerge to guide evaluation of such improvisations.

The originating motivation for this technique – free and spontaneous improvisation of bodily contact movements – has sometimes been superseded by choreographers' use of it in conventional theatre settings in set dance works often accompanied by music or words. This puts new movement content into a more conventional context and removes the element of risk involved in improvisation. It also, perhaps, puts restrictions on performance of the duos in that the dancers, to some extent, will re-orientate their movements in alignment to an audience. Nonetheless, in order that the vocabulary is not changed or undermined, the inward focus of the duo has to remain intact. The performers cannot project focus out to the audience whilst engaged in various lifting, rolling, leaning movements – their concentration has to be on and with each other.

Dance composition students have found this technique to be an accessible and almost indispensable vocabulary of movement in expressing some of today's issues – but more on this later. The essential effect of Contact Improvisation has been a freeing up and extending of the ways in which two people can relate in terms of movement. We now see a much greater variety of lifts, women lifting women or men and vice versa, of falls and rolls. An eclectic mix of natural movement, martial arts, wrestling and tumbling actions – which inspired Paxton's Contact Improvisation – and an increasing range of content emanating from its use and development by various choreographers have created an extensive new dance vocabulary for dance composition. Frequently combined with release techniques, the weighted, relaxed feel and look of the movement content provides students with a new domain in which they can experiment to find their own particular ways of using it. The previous chapter presented an example context for such experimentation where students were set the task of adapting some of the throwing, pulling, pushing, lifting, etc., movements experienced in improvisation based on images of wind to express human conflict.

Experimentation with various Contact Improvisation movements would extend the partner relationship possibilities and add richness to the range of movements used in contact.

An alternative shift away from rigid and conventional dance techniques has frequently led choreographers to revert to basic and everyday movement as content for composition. David Gordon was one of the leading exponents in this. His dancers of the 1960s had ordinary bodies of all shapes and sizes and moved in very natural ways – walking, running, rolling, lying, sitting, gesturing and stillness. His dance pieces became more theatrical towards the end of the twentieth century, but they are still recognisable for their pedestrian movement with its ‘laid-back sense of casualness where nothing is ever strained’ (Robertson and Hutera, 1988). In Gordon’s pieces everyday and abstract natural body movements are always highly organised in space, time and group patterning, but they look and feel totally natural, unhampered by technical demands.

Some choreographers have gone to extremes in the use of everyday functional movements such as cooking beefburgers in front of audiences, but in most cases they have applied choreographic constraints or rules to make what a lay person would claim as ‘even I can do that’ into a disciplined and complex outcome beyond the capability of totally untrained dancers. Some of the choreographic devices invented to arrive at such outcomes will be discussed below.

Everyday actions can be used in conjunction with Contact Improvisation and indeed seem to be a logical means of making transitions or moving individually between contact duos, since the same style of weighted, free, relaxed movement without conventional technical demands such as stretched feet, line and uplifted bodies, is apparent in both vocabularies. Students will find such movement easier to manage, but even everyday movement needs to be selected, given particular rhythmic and spatial shape and linked carefully into phrases. The choreographic processes will impose such discipline.

Everyday actions, especially ‘minimalistic’ gestures, are the basis of vocabulary for several choreographers, most notably, in Britain, Lea Anderson. The Cholmondeleys, her all female company, often perform small movements of the head and hands, or make imperceptible changes in posture in sitting, lying or standing positions, all of which appear totally natural and easy to do – until they are attempted. Co-ordinating and sequencing movements of various unconnected

small body parts into rhythmic and precise sharp movement patterns take time to achieve, especially in unison with other dancers – one of Anderson's characteristic features.

Another characteristic evident in some of Anderson's works is the use of a mix of dance genres. As Mackrell (1992) says, Anderson:

often raids other dance forms for movements and gestures – incorporating ballet, flamenco, ballroom and Scottish folk dance. Sometimes she parodies them . . . but often the movements are integrated into her own style . . . (Mackrell, 1992, p. 58)

Anderson's work *Dancing on your Grave* (2008) for the Cholmondeleys and Featherstonehaughs continues in this approach by merging reminiscences of music hall dancing and singing performances with her own style – 'the precise sense of gesture, the quirkiness, the downright way of creating a theatrical world' (Zoë Anderson, *Independent Review*, 18 February 2009) to present the theme of deceased and downtrodden artistes in continuous performance in purgatory.

Such eclectic treatment of movement leads to further alternatives in dance movement content. Here, there is frequently a base technique which becomes altered through the incorporation of various elements from another technique. Shobana Jeyasingh, for example, has developed a new vocabulary by injecting some Western contemporary dance elements into what was an essentially purist Bharatha Natyam style. Changing the rhythmic content to fit Western style music, or dancing the original rhythms against melodic continuous sound, makes for subtle differences in nuances of expression in, for example, *Configurations* (1992). Further transformations in movement content are beginning to emerge in her choreography because she is taking more risks in bringing together Bharatha Natyam and contemporary dance techniques. The result of this in *So Many Islands* (1996) is fascinating. The dancers use the floor, extend legs and stretch out arms, glide through level changes into and out of group shapes, yet the Bharatha Natyam style is never sacrificed. Such subtlety of interaction between two seemingly disparate styles produces an exciting new and eclectic vocabulary of dance movement. As Mackrell states:

*In her company's latest work, *Just Add Water?* (2009) she examines both forms of integration [cooking and choreography] in a single work. As all six dancers . . . from different parts of the world . . . draw closer together they exchange recipes and moves. But as Jeyasingh orchestrates links between their languages (a pirouette dovetails into a south Asian turn) she shifts the work towards a choreographic Esperanto where all combine.*

(Guardian Culture, 6 May 2009)

If students were to experience such movement marriages in practical workshops, they too could learn about different styles and develop their own mixes of them. The influence of South Asian dance (as above), African dance, street dance or rock 'n' roll styles, for example, changes and extends contemporary dance vocabulary in many varied directions.

Students should explore all the above alternatives in dance movement vocabulary so that they can draw from a range for their own compositions. As indicated above, artists' workshops are a good way of informing them of such vocabularies.

Themes and reading of themes

Cunningham, put at the spearhead of post-modernism by Copeland (1983), influenced the removal of expression, representation or the symbolic from much of the experimental choreography of the 1960s and 70s. As Jowitt (1988) states:

His dancers play no roles, assume no emotions on demand, or pretend to a goal beyond the accomplishment of the dancing.

(p. 278)

There is no story, no intended meaning, in Cunningham's choreography. If meanings are perceived they are individually created by members of the audience. His dance works feature pure movement and stillness. For example, *Summerspace* (1958) contains simple hops, jumps and turns, rapid travelling runs and long pauses. This puts emphasis on natural bodily actions of the body: just dancing for its own sake. Although his later works became more and more

technical (for example, *Points in Space*, 1986), the stripping away of expression or symbolic meanings in the movement content remained a characteristic of his choreography and this has been very influential in the work of many other dance makers.

Cunningham based his movement vocabulary on nature and the natural. He observed the movement of his dancers, people in the street, animals, objects, to discover and experiment with the unexpected in terms of gesture, stance and rhythmic movement. His unequivocal interest in chaos influenced his treatment of movement as subject in that there is a random interplay in the juxtaposition of phrases. This signals that movement as theme (for the works) lays particular emphasis on the manner of composing which will be discussed later.

Many dance practitioners took this movement for its own sake route in their alternative experimental dance journeys. Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, David Gordon, Lucinda Childs, to name but a few working in the USA, made movement the theme. Rainer, for example, in *Trio A* (1966) constructed movement on the lines of 'minimalist sculpture' (Foster 1986). She goes on to say:

Throughout its single sustained phrase, made from an eclectic blend of twists, swings, walks, bends, rolls, kicks, lunges, balances, crouches, and smaller gestural movements of the head and arms, no moves were repeated. . . . Instead of shapes and poses or organically developing phrases, Trio A offered only transitions, a continuous sequence of actions without pauses or dynamic changes of any kind. . . . Rainer's Trio A gave bodily action a sense of accustomed economy. (p. 174)

Here then, as in others' works, the sheer concentration on movement requires an intellectual response from its audiences: for example, recognising mathematical patterning in multiple combinations and spatial perspectives in Child's work, and phrases broken up and regrouped in differing spatial and relationship configurations in Brown's pieces. Some British practitioners also fall into this category: notably in her early period, Butcher, who studied and was influenced by the post-modernists in New York.

Moving away from movement as theme to the other extreme of dramatic action, Pina Bausch is claimed as a 'trailblazer' and a 'revolutionary providing the

first genuine alternative to the American post-modernists' (Robertson and Hutera, 1988). The highly emotional expressionist pieces (sometimes four hours long) force the audience to identify with the innermost psychological perspectives of individuals and their relationships, especially man–woman relationships. As stated by Robertson and Hutera:

Her international company of twenty-six performers seem to use the innermost secrets of their lives as the springboard into these performances. They spew out their guts both physically and emotionally with an honesty that has become the byword for all of the Bausch imitators. (p. 228)

This emphasis on personal realities has produced the label theatre of experience to describe Bausch works. Her motivations may well be confrontational in that she 'reduces the distance and brings "reality of the wishes" into uncomfortable proximity' (Servos and Weigelt, 1984). Bausch intentionally makes the audience cringe in fear, feel desolate and anxious about victimisation – especially of women at the hands of men – and feel disgust in the face of discrimination. By dealing with such psychological, political and social themes, Bausch is concerned to cause a reaction to such realities. She is less concerned with aesthetic appeal and audiences liking her work.

DV8 Physical Theatre has been linked to the work of Pina Bausch. Here too there are no punches pulled. Lloyd Newson's choreography probes issues, for example, gender and sexuality issues and deals with them taking 'daring physical risks which parallel the emotional risks' (Robertson and Hutera, 1988).

Dance students in higher education might also address such themes and emulate the dramatic but non-narrative ways in which they are treated by artists like Bausch and Newson. Following a good deal of experience in viewing and study of the abstract and fragmentary methods used to present these themes, students can be given tasks that collect evidence on a particular issue (racism, for example) and then they can set about making a storyboard out of the seemingly unconnected pieces. This montage effect in the treatment of a theme allows for many different ideas and even personal experiences to enter the dance piece as the group works on it.

A cross-referencing method of treating themes is also occurring in today's

practice in post-modern or new dance contexts. This might occur by means of referencing new dance works with old ones, for example, Matthew Bourne's *Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake*, Mats Ek's *Giselle*, or cross-referencing with other art forms such as Ian Spink's *De Gas* (1981), which derived from Degas' Impressionist paintings, and his *Further and Further into the Night* (1984) which is based upon incidents in Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, *Notorious*. Informed viewings and reading, together with discussion of these choreographers' works, can lead to students attempting to research ways in which they can make cross-references in their work as exemplified with great skill by Spink. Jordan (1992) underlines Spink's treatment of themes in describing how his works:

mix imagery from a variety of sources and, by revitalising ideas in new contexts, demonstrate the fluid relationship between a sign and its meaning, between signifier and signified. In this respect, they are certainly post-modern . . . pieces draw unashamedly from history or the real world of the present, rather than making supposedly 'original' stories: they borrow from politics, personal history, high and vernacular art. (p. 200)

Clearly, the artists mentioned above usually take from the original and alter it so that the cross-reference is presented in such a way as to make the audience think about the original – its political innuendoes, or clichéd meanings. For example, Burnside (1994), in discussing Bourne's *Nutcracker*, suggests that:

Bourne's great skill is to take the visual clichés such as oppressed waifs and deftly exploit their comic potential by twisting them slightly askew. He takes elements of a movement style and sets them to work producing tableaux worthy of a nineteenth-century genre painter and then dissolves them into something else undermining their pathos. (p. 39)

Hence, the message is often a reinterpretation of the old idea from a modern cultural perspective. The reinterpretation therefore conveys much about contemporary society.

From the above, a mere tip of the iceberg has been revealed in discussion of

post-modernists' themes and their treatments of them. Attention has been given to two extremes – composers who deal with movement as theme and composers who take up political and social issues or attempt to deal with psychological behaviours in some way. The tremendous variety between, and at, these extremes cannot be given attention here, but the study of dance composition, specially at university level, should include investigation of these themes and choreographic treatment of them so that the students' own practice is informed and extended.

Alternative and experimental approaches to dance composition

If there is such a person – the grandparent of experimental alternative approaches in dance making – it has to be Cunningham. He had been Graham's leading male dancer, so that in inventing alternative approaches he was directly opposing well-known and established procedures in modern dance choreography. He became leader of the movement away from:

- drama and symbolic dance movements to express plots/feelings
- using music as an inextricable part of the expressive and rhythmic form
- hierarchies of role within dance works in which the lead is always in the centre
- conventional settings and use of performance space
- conventional structural devices of form (*Methods of construction 5*)
- expecting emotional responses from audience

As indicated in the first part of this chapter, some of his movement vocabulary was inspired by observing natural phenomena and so it became simple and pedestrian. However, his dancers were always technically able and today it is increasingly the case that the Cunningham technique is as demanding and stylised as Graham's technique. So, although never celebrated for its own sake, the technique alone is no longer an antithesis to mainstream modern dance; but every other aspect of Cunningham's work certainly fulfils this brief.

Cunningham's concentration on intrinsic features or qualities in movements and/or space and time provide audiences with abstract, kaleidoscopic comings

and goings of dancers in the varied performance spaces. There is no intentional expression of meaning to be derived from the pieces nor is the viewer's eye directed at any time. Rather, the placing of dancers all over the space, moving simultaneously in differing ways requires that a viewer makes a choice about where to look and the order in which the images are perused.

A summary of some of the compositional features in post-modern/new dance works, many of which derive from Cunningham, are listed below:

- a. alternative use of time which gives it an autonomy in that it is dissociated from the sound and often dancers employ their own patterns in time and speed unrelated to others
- b. alternative use of space by shifting movement incidences to different locations on the stage or performance environment; moving in and facing unconventional directions such as from front to back while facing the back
- c. alternative chance of interrelationships between the number of dancers as solos, duos, trios and so on
- d. alternative ways of juxtaposing and ordering sequences of movement through the use of chance and/or other organisational strategies which result in alternative concepts of form for the dance as an entity
- e. alternative sound co-existing independently with the dance and often changes in the sound used for a piece and alternative co-existence of structures or design elements in the dance space which constitute static or moving parts of the piece but usually having only an arbitrary relationship with the movement content

For the purposes of discerning ways in which alternative and experimental approaches in dance composition can be tried out by student composers, each of the above listed approaches will be discussed with some reference made to practising choreographers' works. As stated above, it is possible here to refer to only a few of the many choreographers working with alternative approaches. However, constant reference to professional exemplars is a necessary strategy in this sort of work. The importance of resource-based teaching/learning in this context cannot be stressed enough. A range of alternative and experimental work

should always be available to students so that they learn that there are as many different ways of employing each of the above approaches as there are choreographers exemplifying them.

A. Use of time

Cunningham 'let each movement or set of movements "find" its own time' (Jowitt, 1988). This can be a rewarding and interesting way of playing with the time orchestration of dancers in space. For example, if five dancers perform the same movement sequence each could decide when to perform or hold still, when to move slowly or fast with or without stops, to accelerate, decelerate, move in slow motion, or double time and so on. The result will probably be different in each performance if time and speed are improvised. The outcome will result in chance unison, canon through overlap, movement against stillness and high energy focus against quiet background, without or independent of, a sound accompaniment.

Another variation in the use of time is discussed in Banes (1980):

Uninflected phrasing, which Rainer made paradigmatic in Trio A, had the effect of flattening the time structure so that dynamics no longer participated in the design of the dance over time. (p. 16)

Students find this challenging in that emphasis removed from dynamics places more importance on the action, space and perhaps relationship aspects of movement. Several exponents in post-modern or new dance employ this use of time in group unison.

B. Use of space

Again, Cunningham was instrumental in making changes in the use of space in contemporary choreography. In terms of location in the dance space, the centre is no longer emphasised in importance. Sometimes the only extended movement happening is at the back of the space which can only be seen in glimpses through the dancers either standing or moving in front of this. Even Kylian, a mainstream choreographer, employs this use of space (eg. the final duo's section in *Symphonies of Psalms*, 1978). Cunningham and others after him have challenged the conventions in use of locations for particular expressive purposes

(see Section 1 of this book and Humphrey (1959), *The Art of Making Dances*). Students can experiment with alternative approaches by placing dancers in unusual locations such as at one side of the space, at the back or even in the audience. A very interesting approach derived from drama is to present the piece 'in promenade' in a large space or in a series of rooms so that the audience has to move to see the dance.

Emphasis on the use of different directions is not particularly experimental since all choreographers aim for variety in this respect. However, like David Gordon, some choreographers present numerous repetitions at different angles so that there are multiple views. This is achieved by the bodies changing direction in the space. However, an alternative method of moving in different directions, as seen in some of Lucinda Child's early work, is to keep the body facing in one direction but to move in many different directions across and around the floor producing intricate geometric patterns. The sheer repetition of movement to create slight variations in the pattern produces a mesmeric shifting kaleidoscopic effect. The focus on spatial pattern created only by simple and dynamically undifferentiated actions produces what has been labelled minimalist composition. It is a discipline in itself to attempt this process so students might benefit from such an exercise, if only to recognize the difficulty of producing minimalist dance pieces.

C. Interrelationships

The time and space aspects discussed above can be employed by dancers working as soloists, in duos or larger groups. This often produces a kind of dissonance in that two, three or four seemingly separate dances can be presented simultaneously or, perhaps by chance, in canon. Lea Anderson uses this alternative device, for example, in the video version of *Flesh and Blood* (1989) when two unrelated groups present percussive unison gestural sequences creating a kind of dissonance – two different but not dissimilar tunes going on at the same time. Much experimenting with inter-relationships of distinctive and separate solo or group segments can produce rich, varied and complex dance pieces. Here, students are not attempting to find complementary relationships which coherently make a unified whole. Rather, they are dealing with juxtapositions of fragments and retaining and presenting their differences in simultaneous or successive motion.

D. Form

This has led to dance pieces composed:

- of content in fragments
- parts or sections not logically connected
- with much use of repetition without development
- without concern for unity and with no sense of clear beginning, middle and end with no reference to conventional 'rules' such as the importance of climax, transitions, proportion and balance of the parts in relationship

Hence these alternative approaches make clear departures from the mainstream approaches to form discussed in *Methods of construction 3–5*. Such experiments with form are probably the most practised alternative approaches in dance composition.

There are many ways in which juxtaposition of movements within a sequence or of sequences themselves can occur. Plotting of entrances, exits and journeys between dancers as the 'blueprint', or only constraint for the dance allows for experimentation of movement content and time aspects in pre-determined orders. Conversely, tossing a coin or using a dice will produce random means of ordering content. A set of six movements organised according to the order of six throws of a dice might well produce a repetition of some moves and an absence of others. For example, one dancer may come up with 5, 5, 3, 1, 6, 5, and another dancer with 2, 4, 1, 2, 6, 1. Given four dancers with different combinations of the same movements and performed in various time and space combinations, the outcome can be very interesting. Hence, planning of the dance elements and the instruction to 'use chance ordering methods' can lead to a pre-learned sequence for each dancer put into unplanned group sequences by combining different numerical orders.

Another system is to mix pre-learned sequences in 'real time'. In Trisha Brown's early work, *Line Up* (1976), for example, instructions are given to named dancers by one dancer sitting in the audience. Spontaneous instructions to reverse, to change sequence, to speed up, etc. lead to improvised form out of set content. Indeed, Brown is renowned for experimenting with different systems to determine order. Her different versions of the piece she called *Accumulations* explore, for

instance, around thirty movements accumulated as 1; 1,2; 1,2,3; 1,2,3,4; etc. And deconstruct in similar progressive ways. She has also added to the repetition of such patterns a constant splicing between two different monologues about personal experiences totally unrelated to the movement content.

Another practice frequently found in American post-modernists' work is to bring parts of dances previously constructed into new juxtapositions. Brown's *Line Up* (1976 and 1977), for example, has drawn from six other pieces interspersed with the instruction to line up. 'The continuous forming and reforming of lines causes the dance to hover between order and disorder' (programme note in Banes, 1980).

In the more dramatic context of Second Stride's *Lives of the Great Poisoners* (1991), a collaging of fragmentary references to three stories about murderers of differing times and places – Medea, Madame de Brinvilliers and Crippen – are interspersed with references to the work of the inventor of leaded petrol and CFC gases, a contemporary murderer of a different kind (Rubidge, 1991). Such interweaving of thematic fragments is also enriched with an integration of dance, design, music, song and spoken text. Spink has done much to bring together such diversity but his theatre cannot be aligned with others using similar choreographic procedures because the content is so different – biased perhaps towards theatre rather than dance.

The mixing of thematic fragments and different art forms with a much more physical range of dance content is perhaps characteristic of most physical theatre choreographers. Bausch, DV8 and Vandekeybus and more recently, in the USA, Larry Keigwin take these routes but they also often employ physical environments and objects as part of the choreographic process. For example, Keigwin's *Natural Selection* (2004) shows extreme athleticism in that dancers travel horizontally across the back wall, on each other, diving, throwing and back flipping. Nonetheless, the principle of montage seems applicable to this range of choreographers. Images are constantly changed and built into a complex web of multi-layered sets of inferences. There are no clear links or logical inter-relationships of the parts. Rather the dance works are made up of different aspects of the theme(s) sewn together in a patchwork manner.

After study of some of these choreographers' works, students might well create separate sequences of dance movement to employ within the montage of events to be contained in their interpretations of theme. Some of the above-mentioned

random ways of deciding on the order, such as numbering them and using dice, might be used to determine a non-linear dance form. The insertion of verbal or sung text and varieties of sound-scapes adds to the interchanging dance as opposed to everyday movement content to make a mixture of surrealist and realist fragments for the dance composition. In Bauschian style, for example, students may choose to speak of their own experiences or feelings in some sections and to create abstract dance sequences, perhaps using contact improvisation, in other sections of the piece – each section dealing with a different aspect of the theme. Interspersing realistic spoken sections with symbolic dance sequences is a challenging compositional problem. Experimenting with such alternative approaches when juxtapositioning the fragments can lead university students to produce adventurous and original post-modern dance pieces.

Further restrictions in terms of having no climaxes in the piece, for example, and/or making some parts disproportionately longer than others, and/or exposing transitions as important elements or not having any at all, will help students to break the rules that hitherto may have been stringently applied. Such practices, of course, make further rules for the composers if they are to find success in post-modern choreography.

E. Sound and design elements

To some extent this has been discussed above. Suffice it to say that much experimentation with different music or sound accompanying any one dance piece should be encouraged. Similarly, montages of music, noise, silence, text and song can be created to accompany the constant changing of image.

Design of structures to invade the dancer's space and/or movable objects such as chairs, stones or water in containers can also provide bases for much experimental work within the piece. Inclusion of such elements often causes changes to the movement content and if they are movable, their intrinsic qualities add to the overall visual images.

To conclude

The alternative approaches discussed in this chapter are but a few within the lexicon. Students should certainly experience such alternatives, but perhaps not until the traditional/conventional practices have been absorbed. As Fraleigh (1987) says:

New examples do not replace old ones. We recognise the new in reference to the old according to kind and through some level of community agreement . . . In modern dance new has often been mistaken for better. But if new were necessarily better, art would be too easy, not worth our attention, and of no lasting value.

(p. 129)

Certainly, there are some alternative approaches within the above text that can be explored by younger or relatively inexperienced learners. However, unless the rules or traditional principles of dance composition are learned first (*Methods of construction 1–6*), it is not possible to experiment with ways in which they can be broken. A study of some of the exponents of post-modern or new dance will alert dance students to the diversity of alternative approaches.

Throughout this chapter, perhaps more than in other chapters, there has been reference made to professional dance works. It is the interplay of learning from such exemplar resources and of experimenting with them that creates the composers' knowledge of alternative approaches in dance composition. Focus on resource-based teaching in sections 4 and 5 is therefore logical and necessary to promote this integrated methodology.

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Section 3

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The creative process in dance composition

It may appear to be rather back to front to be considering the creative process at this point in the book, yet arguably, there is a case for defining the material content, and the methods in which such content might be constructed to create a dance composition before attempting to analyse the complex concepts related to creativity and the processes involved. In discussing the processes, this Section makes reference to the practice of a student at third-year level in a degree course. At this stage it is assumed that the knowledge and skills detailed in Sections 1 and 2 of this book have been studied and absorbed. It is therefore appropriate to present a detailed look at how such knowledge and skills might be embedded into the creative process at this later point.

The creative process

There are many writings on the creative process in artistic practice, yet few relate specifically to dance composition. It is acknowledged and assumed that the dance composer is a creative artist and that the same principles relating to the processes of other artists – music composers, playwrights, visual artists and so on – apply to the choreographer. Making reference to visual artists, as an example, this may be true in terms of generalities relating to the process but it should be recognised also that there are significant differences between the processes of a visual artist and a choreographer.

These obviously include differences in the medium. Choreographers, of course, work on live dancers and therefore perhaps have less control of their medium in that dancers' bodies are all different and they think, feel and respond to choreographic ideas in different ways. Very often in contemporary dance practice, dancers contribute movement material and therefore can influence

the creative process and outcome composition.¹ Hence the dance composer, unless working on a solo for him or herself, has to negotiate with other artists during the creative process. This is not usually the case for a visual artist.

A further important difference is that of the transience and ephemeral character of movement in time and space as opposed to paint on a canvas, for example. The latter can be seen, studied, left and returned to and will not change unless the artist puts brush and paint to canvas again. The former disappears the moment after it has been created and therefore has to reside in the memory of both the composer and the dancer if it is to be reflected upon before to making changes or establishing its appropriateness for the piece. The dancers may also perform the movement ideas a little differently each time they are repeated during the choreographic process. This is usually a huge problem for student composers because they have limited time with their dancers and time may pass before they can meet again to continue the process. So capture and recording of the movement ideas for the composer to work on between rehearsals seems to be crucial if the composition is to steadily grow and flower. Before the age of technology, choreographers would probably write copious notes and make drawings or use a system of notation to ensure that their ideas were not lost. Today, of course, we have video cameras – an important and almost essential tool for dance composers whose time with dancers can be very brief indeed.

Another difference is the fact that dance composition frequently involves use of other art forms, particularly music. In the case of student composers, choice of musical accompaniment – before, during or even after the dance has been composed – limits their creative freedom to some degree in that the already-composed music lays down certain parameters for the dance – perhaps its style, form and range of content. Such constraints would appear to dampen the creativity of the composer yet, as will become evident below they may also inspire in ways that may not have occurred without such influences. A really well made piece of music, for example, is likely to help the composer structure the dance. (See *Vocalise* on the accompanying DVD). Similarly, an interesting piece of

¹ Jo Butterworth provides a really good model which places the process of choreography on a continuum from the didactic to democratic in her chapter titled *Too Many Cooks? A framework for dance making and devising* in the book edited by herself and Liesbeth Wildschut – *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2009.

sculpture may act as a stimulus to evoke new, previously unexplored spatial ideas for a dance composition. Hence, use of other arts accompanying or acting as stimuli, rather than limiting it, can extend and deepen the dance composer's creative process. Nonetheless, as distinct from the visual artist, there is a requirement that the dance composer applies understanding of at least one other art form (most commonly, music), its techniques, content and form in order to successfully incorporate it into the dance composition.

Having explored some of the differences in the creative process for dance, it is perhaps helpful to consider characteristics of the process that are common to all artists. Theorists have examined the creative process by studying creative individuals, particularly artists – their products and the processes that they undergo in creating their art. Such studies look at philosophical, psychological, historical, environmental, economic, cultural and even political factors affecting the creative processes and outcomes. There are many sources that discuss concepts relating to creativity so it is considered unnecessary to explore various theories pertaining to the creative process here. Rather than leaving theory to one side and concentrating only on the practical process, however, and although there are probably as many opinions about the nature of creativity as there are writers who theorise on the subject, it is considered important that a particular conceptual basis is selected as the theory that best underpins the discussion of the creative processes discussed in this Section.

Writers such as Abbs (1989: 200) refer to the importance of play and spontaneity in the initial stages of the process, whereas Eisner (1972: 80) suggests that this preliminary stage requires the use of skills to manage and manipulate the material in order to create some starting point. The tension here then is between intuitive spontaneity on the one hand, and skills and knowledge on the other. The interaction between these seemingly opposing aspects is considered. Such a discussion may help dance composers to reflect on and make changes in their practice by emphasising different phases, or injecting new approaches to enrich both the process and its resultant product.

Taking account of the tensions mentioned above, the following table may help to represent the composer's means towards undertaking a creative process in dance.

The creative process in dance composition

Objective knowledge and skills

Knowledge of dance – vocabulary, styles, techniques to express ideas

Choreographic devices and methods of construction

Acquaintance with practices in the field through study of other choreographers’ works

Knowledge about the theme for the dance derived from research

Knowledge of other art forms

Subjective creative inputs

Personal movement style/ signature

Inspiration and imagination

Feeling responses/intuition

Originality and spontaneity

Flexibility and divergent thinking – seeking difference and allowing for accidents

Personal interpretation of the theme and own life-experiences entering the dance

PROCESSES

Selecting from known ideas and material

Using known devices to manipulate material

Taking ideas that have been used before and re-working them

Applying research or knowledge to guide the process and inform the outcome

Playing to find new ideas and material

Exploring new ways of using material

Going with feelings to find new ideas and approaches

Taking risks, experimenting with the unknown towards an unimagined outcome

Phases in creativity

Most theorists agree that there are phases in the creative process and that although it is possible to describe and recognise each phase, they rarely can be applied in a linear or formulaic way. Abbs (1989), for example, proposes that there are five phases in what he calls a creative cycle:

- Phase 1 – the impulse to create
- Phase 2 – working with the medium
- Phase 3 – realising the final form
- Phase 4 – presentation and performance
- Phase 5 – response and evaluation

Abbs (1989: 204)

The dance composer may well start with an idea or a response to a stimulus such as a piece of music or a poem, for example, which could be considered to be the phase 1 impulse to create. On the other hand, working with the medium (phase 2) by just spontaneously playing with movement could result in an impulse to create a dance based on the movements explored. Also some choreographers may well start with an idea (phase 1) and then design a form (phase 3) – a framework for the piece – before they begin to manipulate and work with the details of movement (phase 2). The orders of phases 4 and 5 are perhaps not easily changed around except that once a first version of a dance is created it could of course be radically altered as a result of the performance and evaluation. Students often find that having put the pieces together, the whole does not work as they imagined it would and they need to revisit phases 2 and 3 to make changes, or even, start all over again with a new idea – but this is very daunting and such re-starts cannot usually happen due to constraints of time and availability of dancers.

All the above phases have been discussed as aspects of dance composition within this book. The starting points or stimuli, the creating of stylised and expressive motifs then developing and varying them and organising the material in time and space have been identified as the material content (Section 1) and methods of construction (Section 2) – practices that need to be known and applied in dance composition. However, such knowledge and practical skill derived from work in the dance studio, viewing and learning from ‘master’

choreographers² and from theoretical study of dance and allied subjects, is unlikely to be sufficient alone in the creative process of dance-making. This list constitutes the left side of the above table and takes no account of the right side – the less tangible personal inputs of the creative process. This Section therefore pays more attention to the latter elements and at the same time attempts to suggest ways in which both sides might interrelate. Osmosis between these sides (perhaps related to the corresponding sides of the brain) through the processes listed in the lower box of the table should result in a product that is imaginative, original and inspiring whilst displaying depth of knowledge in terms of use of content and form to communicate the idea in an artistic and significant way.

The creative process in dance composition – an example

To attempt to identify how such an osmosis might occur between the objective knowledge/skills and subjective, intuitive/feeling aspects in the creative process, an example of a student's dance composition experience is presented below. Carly Annable was a student studying for her BA Honours degree in Dance at the University of Leeds Bretton Hall Campus, UK. As a selected subject for a research project³ her work for the final Year 3 Choreography assessment was captured on digital video over the whole six-week process, in rehearsal and in final performance. To attempt to identify and analyse her creative process, the writer of this book – who was also the director of the research project – conducted interviews with the choreographer at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the process. This data was added to many hours' worth of digital video recording; audio-tapes created by the choreographer after each rehearsal to record her views on the processes that had taken place, how the dance was progressing – what worked and what did not work, etc.; her written log book that summarised

² Analysis of professional artists' dance works and use of them to develop students' skills and understanding in dance composition is discussed in Section 4 of this book.

³ A project (2002–3) to test the feasibility of producing and distributing CD-ROM resource packs featuring different choreographic processes undertaken by Year 3 degree students as resources for future students. The project produced a pilot CD-ROM, created, by Jim Schofield, Michael Schofield and Jacqueline Smith-Autard – the creative team of Bedford Interactive – featuring the work of the student discussed in this Section. This CD-ROM received positive feedback from 15 universities but lack of funding resulted in it being put on hold. Unfortunately, it is unlikely now that the resource will be produced.

the processes and evaluated the outcomes including the finished product; and of course the 15-minute dance piece itself – *Spaceometry*.

Phase 1 – the impulse to create

Annable's phase 1 began about a year before the composing process began. She has an interest in sculpture and since the Bretton Hall Campus of the University of Leeds is sited in the famous Yorkshire Sculpture Park, she had ample opportunity to spend time with a range of sculpture including pieces by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. She also had some excellent secondary resources in the form of library books, photographs, slide shows, etc. from which she collected images of sculpture and architecture. Annable was mostly interested in the sculptures as spatial stimuli for dance focusing on 'line and shape, positive and negative space, repetition, angles of lines and layering' (Annable, 2002: 4). She studied writings about the work of Anthony Caro, Richard Serra and Naum Gabo alongside texts that describe dance spatial concepts. The former discussed the:

*geometry of space articulated in terms of 'complex configurations',
'oppositions', 'balance', 'intersecting planes' and 'form' to name
but a few concepts.* Annable (2002: 4)

The latter included study of Laban's orientations in space which consist in twenty-six directional rays in the kinesphere that surrounds the body, many of which, she noted, are unused when moving – particularly those behind the body. In this context, Annable conducted research into 'space in the body and the body in space, positive and negative space and spatial orientation' (Annable, 2002: 1) and was particularly intrigued with a statement made by Ullmann – 'Space is a hidden feature of movement and movement is a visible aspect of space' (Ullmann, 1966: 4).

In addition, Annable studied the work of three choreographers who, for her, in different ways put emphasis on spatial content in their choreographies. William Forsythe's⁴ work fascinated her 'in terms of the complexity and speed of the

⁴ The main source for this work was the CD-ROM, William Forsythe *Improvisation Technologies: A Tool for the Analytic Dance Eye* (1999).

dancers' limbs moving around their bodies . . . executing actions that slice through the space' and she also became intrigued with Forsythe's methods of 'composing movement which departs from the geometry of space by constructing and working with virtual lines in space positioned in any space around the body' (Annable, 2002: 11).

The second choreographer studied was Trisha Brown who is known to have expanded ways in which the body is choreographed in space.

Annable selected two pieces: *If You Couldn't See Me* (1994), a solo; and *You Can See Us* (1995), a duet. Her interest in these pieces lay in the fact that Brown had choreographed the first piece without ever showing the audience the front of the soloist, and that the second piece presented the two dancers in opposition performing the same movement – one facing and the other backing on to the audience. Annable wrote that:

This idea of seeing the back perspective of movement in counterpoint with a frontal view was an area that I wanted to experiment with within the choreography to draw attention to different perspectives of movement. Annable (2002:10)

In her reading about Rosemary Butcher, her third selected choreographer, Annable came across this quotation:

. . . spatial emphasis can encourage the spectator to shift from viewing the dancers as individuals to seeing them as a distribution in space or as outlines or shapes that correspond with other spatial forms. Jordan (1986:15)

On viewing Butcher's piece, *Body as Site* (1995) Annable noted the multi-directional 'organisation of dancers in multiple configurations and orientations that form, then disassemble to later reassemble' (Annable, 2002: 12). She reflected on these ideas and planned to experiment with simultaneous movement of the whole group of dancers using these concepts.

All this preparatory research resulted in a collection of notes from books, many pictures of sculptures and architecture, several videos of choreographers' dance works and the CD-ROM featuring Forsythe's approaches, all of which she intended

to share with her dancers during the process of composing the dance that she later called *Spaceometry*. This material, together with Annable's personal interest in and prior knowledge of spatial aspects of choreography, can be seen to constitute the objective knowledge⁵ that fed into phase 1 – the impulse to create in the model proposed by Abbs (1989). However, there were also Annable's own imaginative responses to all these sources and the feelings that she had in viewing them that inspired images in her mind's eye for her own dance piece. As the time for the start of her work came closer, Annable revised and reviewed the range of sources described above and the time spent engaged with them provided her with images of movements and spatial configurations that *might* emerge when working with her five dancers.

From the outset, however, she decided that she did not want to direct the whole dance composition movement by movement. Rather, she determined to experiment and explore her visualised images by setting the dancers tasks – some fairly closed and others more open – to generate movement ideas from five dancer-creators whilst she selected, amended and refined their outcomes to fit into her own imagined motifs and phrases for the composition. Hence, phase 1 included the inspirational work with the above-mentioned sources which defined the theme of the dance and its possible style (after Forsythe), a decision on the number and type of dancers to engage, consideration of the methods that she wished to employ and, importantly, the many images and visions that she had in her head, notes and drawings. Clearly, however, there would be a constant revisiting of phase 1 as will become evident below.

Phase 2 – working with the medium

This phase was initiated first by the composer spending time alone in the dance studio improvising to explore her own spontaneous responses to the stimuli and methods of exploring space using Forsythe's approaches. This kinaesthetic play provided ideas that would underpin subsequent creative work undertaken by the choreographer by leading five dancers in improvisation and exploration of the

⁵ See the left-hand side of the above chart entitled *The creative process in dance composition*, on page 126.

range of concepts described above. Early free improvisations saw the dancers writing initials in space then creating phrases in solos, duos and trios, and developing these phrases by adding travel in slow motion and real time or incorporating changes of speed and level and adding pauses. Annable also experimented with Forsythe's ideas. For example, she asked dancers to imagine a line in space outside the body but within the kinesphere and to move with different parts of the body going along it, around it, over or under it. Each exploration and improvisation resulted in small clusters of material being stored in the memory by individual dancers. Every workshop was recorded to avoid the problem of loss of movement memory, and audio records made by the choreographer registered movement clusters that she wanted to retain, play with further or discard. The dancers were also asked for views on their experiences of the concepts explored and ways in which the approaches used had or had not taken them into new or different uses of space as compared to their usual preferences. The choreographer noted that gradually the dancers 'began to use all the space around their bodies, and really manipulate body parts into interesting shapes that immediately realised the sculptural quality in the body I had envisaged' (Annable, 2002: 17).

Having explored Forsythe's methods of generating original movement by imagining lines in space, Annable showed the dancers the CD-ROM so that they could identify characteristics of his style because she judged that Forsythe's style is largely derivative from his uses of space. Whilst viewing video footage the dancers were asked to identify characteristics of Forsythe's style. The following list of words was recorded: contorted – intricate – linear – twisting – angular – flowing and rippling – wrapping – sudden and sharp. The dancers experimented in colouring their movements with these qualities whilst using the short phrases that they had already produced using Forsythe's approaches to improvisation by responding to spatial tasks.

During all these workshops Annable observed the dancers and determined that she wished also to incorporate each dancer's own stylistic approach to space. She noted that:

dancer 1 is elongated, smooth and extended
dancer 2 is fluid and sustained
dancer 3 tends to be fast, sharp and precise in her movements

dancer 4 is sharp and cutting

dancer 5 has a slow and suspended quality.

Annable (2002: 18)

The next task was more open in that each dancer was given a picture of a piece of sculpture by either Naum Gabo or Anthony Caro. Having spent time looking at the details, they were asked to experiment with constructing parts or the whole sculpture in space and this permitted them to use their own stylistic qualities.

For example, dancer number three worked very effectively with Anthony Caro's *Table Piece CCCC*.⁶ She had identified the continuous movement from circle to angle to dropping lines and sharp edges with scooped extensions and reflected this in her movement which had already demonstrated complementary qualities. Those that materialised from dancer three responding to this sculpture contrasted the movement phrases that emerged from the dancer working with *Linear Construction in Space Number 2*⁷ – a sculpture by Naum Gabo. Annable commented that 'at this stage fragments of movement material that exhibited sculptural properties were beginning to evolve'.

A process of material selection was undertaken at this stage. This involved the choreographer and dancers conducting a review of all the fragments that had been generated by viewing the video recordings and then selecting and editing from the various experiments to formulate motifs (quite long phrases). The choreographer commented on each, made suggestions and adapted them to embody her ideas. This led into the next phase.

Phase 3 – realising the final form

Although far from the final form, processes of structuring occurred from this point. The dancers were asked to break up their long phrase motifs into six segments, then each dancer was given a score that led to an accumulative solo phrase. The

⁶ For reasons of copyright it is not possible to insert a copy of a picture of this specific sculpture here. Readers might wish to visit the website www.anthonycaro.org then click on 'enter site', click on 'collections' and scroll down to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art to view *Table Piece CCCLXXXVIII*, the nearest that can be found. It is printable.

⁷ Enter Naum Gabo *Linear Construction* in your browser to see *Number 2*.

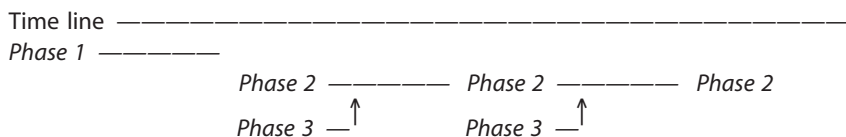
Dance composition

following illustrates two example scores indicating the order in which the segments should be performed:

Score 1	Score 2
1, 1, 2	1
1, 2, 3	1, 2
2, 4	2, 1, 3
1, 2, 3	3, 2, 4,
5, 6	4, 3
	3, 4, 5
	5, 6

This resulted in chance juxtaposition of movements (as suggested on page 116) and opportunities to play with the structure of phrases and change orientations or directions of repeated actions and have them performed on opposite sides of the body. Having viewed the results of this forming process, Annable observed that though the phrases were complex in spatial orientation within the dancers' kinespheres, they were too static. Hence, a brief return to phase 2 was necessary to explore ways of adding travel to the motifs.

As evidenced in her audio commentaries, Annable had had an idea about the overall structure of the piece immediately after the second workshop with her dancers in which they had explored the use of Forsythe's methods and Brown's ideas of facing and backing orientations. She spoke about an ascending form starting with one dancer and then introducing the other four in canon, using all five in the middle section of the dance and then descending back to the original soloist to end the piece. This idea for the form of the piece became reinforced when she found a piece of music for accompaniment that echoed such a structure. She actually stuck to this idea so it would appear that the progression through Abbs' phases in the creative progress so far was more like this:



At this stage the solo for the beginning of the dance had been set so the next move was to bring in dancer number two. From the outset Annable was concerned with the placing and orientation of her dancers in the space and the use of the spaces between dancers. Her starting place⁸ with the duo was to use the 'foreground background' idea derived from a Richard Serra sculpture. She played with cutting and pasting of the generated material and differing spatial relationships with the two dancers and noted several happy accidents that produced the layered images she sought. She also discovered that two differing phrases occurring simultaneously for some time needed to be more connected, so she adopted the strategy of the dancers picking up each others' movements and implemented the front and back facing idea to show spatial variation in unison movement.

At the end of the duo the dancers were oriented in opposition. The next step was to bring in dancer number three. The inspiration⁹ recalled now was another Richard Serra sculpture featuring four panels and intersecting lines in the space. Annable asked dancer three to travel across the space with her motif cutting across dancers one and two and this appeared to work well in presenting dancer three's motifs. But:

... what were dancers one and two to do? I did not want to distract from dancer three's travel, so I asked the two static dancers to 'quote' movement from dancer three but in slow motion. This device reiterates dancer three's solo phrase and highlights the shape and line from different perspectives.

Annable (2002: 31)

The structuring to achieve accumulation of all five dancers continued through references made to various other sculptures, and to pieces choreographed by Trisha Brown and Rosemary Butcher. Once the dancers were together in an ensemble, Annable determined that, in turn, she would have them break out from the space and return re-echoing the accumulation that had occurred in the first section of the dance. This created an inner form within the outer form of the whole piece.

⁸ Requiring a return to phase 1.

⁹ Requiring a return to phase 1, again.

Such form-making decisions derived from Annable's study of principles of form *per se* and from her analysis and interpretation of the sculptural and architectural forms that she used to inspire her. Although clear images and ideas that had been formulated into creative tasks for the dancers were presented by the choreographer at the start of forming new parts of the dance, she gained much by injecting intuitive and spontaneous thoughts that might occur to her at the time. Hence, both left and right sides of the chart on page 126 were involved – the forming process was objectively planned but subjectively altered and enriched during the process.

Phase 4 – presentation and performance and Phase 5 – response and evaluation

These two stages have been put together because it is of course imperative that the dance is performed so that it can be evaluated. If you cannot view it you cannot respond to and evaluate it. Also the way it is presented and performed can effectively determine how the composition is 'read'. For example, if the dancers incorrectly time phrases in relation to each other or face the wrong directions, or put emphases on movements that do not require them or dynamically 'underplay' the qualities defined by the choreographer, the dance is not yet performed to satisfy the composer's intentions.

To attend to such aspects in choreography, presentation and performance occur many times over in the creative process before the work is finally ready for an audience. The composer will spend many hours viewing the dance in live rehearsals or on video recordings and will make judgements concerning parts that do not seem to work well, or on the performance of the dancers, or on the way that the music relates to the dance, etc. In addition, tutors and peers may provide feedback or commentary. Here, many similar ideas and questions offered in the Section 6 of this book (Standing back from the process – evaluations) played a part.

The most important evaluation during the process and certainly in the last stages of rehearsal is that of the composer. Here, in standing back from the process and viewing the product as a realisation of her initial intentions, visualisations and imagined outcome, the composer employs both objective and subjective criteria in making evaluations. It is often the case that some of the

initial fresh and inspirational movement ideas that emerged from the spontaneous play stages in phase 2 disappear or become ironed out and less interesting as the dance is refined, formed and replayed many times in rehearsals. For example, Annable commented in her audio log on an early rehearsal of the full piece that the dance 'lacked dynamic variation' and that 'dancer number one had lost the fragmentary nature of her beginning phrase when made using the score structure'. In the latter case she solved this by injecting stillness into the motif. She also wanted more speed and an increase in the size of the movements in the ensemble section and worked individually with each dancer to get this. In addition, the dancers worked on cleaning up their sculpture motifs to ensure that bodily extension, clarity of line, shape and the sought-after qualities were apparent. In all this work she attempted to 'get the initial excitement' that they had experienced in deriving the movement back into the performance of the finished dance. This is not easy but can be helped through revisiting phase 1 of the process – particularly, in this case, the visual stimuli of sculpture and architecture to inspire the dancers to present and perform a dance that moves through space to create sculptural and architectural forms that will be perceived and enjoyed aesthetically by the audience.

Summary and conclusion

The above example has attempted to demonstrate that the dance composer is likely to employ a cyclical process such as that defined by Abbs, 1989; and that though there is a general progression through each of the five phases, it is highly unlikely that this will occur in a linear fashion. Rather, there will be much revisiting of phases as the work progresses towards final performance.

The example has also shown that both right and left sides of the chart representing the creative process in dance composition actively interrelate in all phases of the process. However, since the example student set out to compose a piece to satisfy university assessment criteria, she probably attended more to demonstration of *objective knowledge and skills* rather than to exposure of her *subjective (personal) creativity*. Having said this though, the only two inputs from the right-hand side of the chart on page 126 perhaps not evident in her process are 'taking risks, experimenting with the unknown towards an unimagined outcome' and use of 'life experiences'. The latter is not really

pertinent to an abstract piece since the composer's life experiences feed more into compositions that symbolise and express life issues, meanings and feelings. The former is difficult to assess since what appears to be a well-used practice for one person is highly experimental and risky for another. Also, the nature of the dance theme perhaps does not lend itself to such journeys in imagination since sculptural and architectural design in space is more cerebral and requires a more formalist rather than emotional/expressive approach. Perhaps this is one reason for Annable's early decision on the overall form of the piece.

Although differing projects will place differing emphases on the right and left sides of the chart, both should be actively engaged so that the composition successfully integrates the acquired objective knowledge and skills of the composer and their originality, imagination, inspiration and feelings – the subjective passion that gives the dance its life and spirit.

To summarise then, some important aspects of the dance composer's creative process that emerge from analysis of the above example and other such projects are listed below:

- initial research of the idea through reading, studying pictures, etc. is essential to ensure that the composer has sufficient knowledge of the theme to be expressed
- brainstorming and playing with ideas is necessary to ensure that the composer's own feeling responses, inspirations and imaginative thoughts become embedded into the dance.
- acquaintance of professional choreographers' works, derived through study such as that described in Section 4 of this book, can inform and enrich the process
- knowledge and understanding of fundamentals in the other participatory arts such as music (rhythm, phrasing, style, etc.) and design (line, shape, colour, etc.) provides the composer with a range of pre-defined parameters that, if used sensitively, can also enrich the dance outcome
- the process of evaluation of both the composition and its performance plays an important role throughout the process – from the initial improvisations to the final performance for an audience

This Section does not pretend to fully explain the creative process of the dance composer. No amount of words could adequately do this.¹⁰ Similarly, the example presented in this Section is not meant as a prescription for all dance composers. Every composer will develop his/her way of engaging in creative processes and each process, even for an individual choreographer, will vary and produce a unique dance. Rather, the above text offers readers some thoughts that may help them to reflect upon their own creative processes in dance composition.

The next Section which examines a resource-based teaching/learning approach, delves deeper into ways in which choreographers' works can inform the student's own composition. Cleary, Annable found inspiration through such study. Following this, Section 5 provides performers with a method of deconstructing and reconstructing a dance piece to improve their own performance of it. Such a methodology employed by the dancers in compliance with the choreographer may have helped Annable to realise more fully her originating intentions through the rehearsal process. Finally, Section 6 offers procedures of evaluation of the dance once it is made. Here also there is attention given to imaginative, intuitive and feeling responses – the right-hand side of the chart titled *The creative process in dance composition* (see page 126). These subjective evaluations are defined, discussed and considered alongside the range of objective knowledge that can be gained from this book to support practical dance composition classes. Hence the recommendation is that balance between right and left is maintained.

¹⁰ Carol Press, in her book *The Dancing Self: creativity, modern dance, psychology and transformative education*, 2002, provides a good attempt yet its emphasis on the creative process as a means of coming to know oneself through dance shifts away from the artistic and aesthetic concerns of the dance outcome towards benefits of personal and transformative education. Hence the balance proposed above could not really be achieved.

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Section 4

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Resource-based teaching/learning – dance composition

Practical assignments in improving dance composition through the use of new technologies with reference to the accompanying DVD

Resource-based teaching/learning

This section aims to demonstrate how important it is to use professional dance works as examples in teaching dance composition. In all other arts, students enhance their learning by study of the practice and products of past and present artists. Over the past forty years, there has been a welcome increase in dance artists' work in education. There is certainly much to be gained by students from this live experience, as well as theatre visits. Furthermore, university students are often lucky enough to work with lecturers who have themselves had professional experience as choreographers or dancers, or both. In this sector, perhaps more than any other, the teaching/learning of dance composition focuses strongly on the work of artists in the field.

There is also an extensive use of linear video and DVD to bring students into contact with professionally choreographed works. Indeed, study of selected works on such technology is an essential element of most dance examinations in schools and colleges.

This is a consequence of the shift in dance education summarised in the

introduction to this book, and analysed in depth in my book, *The Art of Dance in Education* (A&C Black, 1994, 2002). The emerging pedagogy from this shift, with its focus on the dance works of professionals, has been termed by myself and others as resource-based teaching/learning in dance. However, as is often the case in practical activities, practice has become established before theories underpinning it have been considered, rehearsed and reported in writing. Slowly, in addition to the book mentioned above and other articles from the same source, there is a small range of literature emerging to guide producers and/or users of dance resource packs (see References).

An implicit teaching of a method of analysis by application to Siobhan Davies' *White Man Sleeps*, can be discerned in Sarah Whatley's writing (1999).¹ However, there is no clear attempt in this resource to provide conceptual bases for teaching and learning of dance composition through analysis of the Davies work. Insights into the creation and analytic overviews of the choreography with suggestions for practical and theoretical tasks for use in teaching composition and appreciation are provided by Lorna Sanders in her books *Akram Khan's Rush Creative Insights* and *Henri Oguike's Front Line Creative Insights* – both published in 2004. These books, linked with DVD recordings of the works, improve the situation for teachers of examination syllabuses in the UK, but, in other countries and contexts and in comparison with music, drama and art for example, there are not nearly enough resources to support students' learning of dance composition from analysis and appreciation of professional choreographers' works. This is possibly the case because the practice is not yet common in dance education. In the context of higher education in the USA, for example, Morgenroth (2006) confirms that:

Traditional composition classes teach the tools of choreographic craft, yet leave students in an odd limbo in which they create a special breed of 'college dance' that has little to do with the current dance world. (p. 19)

Morgenroth goes on to suggest that 'by trying out methods used by contemporary

¹ Roy, Sanjoy (ed) *White Man Sleeps: Creative Insights*, Dance Books Ltd, Aton, Haunts, 1999.

choreographers, students will discover and develop their own creative processes'. This signals the use of a resource-based teaching/learning methodology and the need for further resources that expose such methods.

In answer to the question, what is resource-based teaching/learning? it might help first to consider definitions.

The word resource is defined as:

- a source or possibility of help
- an available supply that can be drawn upon when needed
- a means of support

The word source – a main part of resource – is defined as:

- the thing from which something originates – the starting point
- something that supplies information that can be used to develop something else

The first usage demands that a resource act as a bank of information that can be used as an advanced teaching/learning aid, or as a means of reference to support work not directly connected with the resource itself. The second usage demands that the resource provide source material for dance work in a variety of contexts. The text below will show that resources in dance can and should be employed in both these ways.

The resource-based teaching methodology,² from the students' point of view, requires that resources be available for individual or group-directed study purposes. This implies that, for example, given a task to identify, list and comment on the dance content and methods of abstraction employed in a snippet of choreography, the students have access to the snippet plus the methods of working. In a good resource, the aim of such a task would be twofold:

1. to produce information that answers the task in respect of the specific dance being studied

² The concept of resource-based teaching/learning is presented in Smith-Autard, *The Art of Dance in Education* (2002) pp. 39–41).

2. to teach the students concepts and principles that lie behind the practice of the artist so that they can apply them appropriately in the analysis of any dance work

New technologies

An interactive CD or DVD-ROM provides an ideal medium for this kind of work. This format offers touch-button, fast access to any part of the dance and control buttons which slow, freeze, move frame-by-frame and so on, together with many additional elements that can be superimposed onto full-screen underlying video: for example, animated drawings, overlaid text/pictures/drawings, interactive menus and charts to aid analysis or breakdown of dance form/content/skills, etc. Appropriate and innovative application of such multimedia facilities exposes the intricacies of dance composition. In addition, comprehensive, multilayered multimedia resources provide flexible ranges of material for several contexts – school, university, initial and in-service teacher training – and can be used for both class teaching and student-based distance learning.

The 5th edition of this book (2004) demonstrated the type of resource described above by making detailed reference to Bedford Interactive's *Wild Child – an interactive CD-ROM resource pack for dance education* (2001)³ (formerly published in 1999 in CD-i format) which, at the time, was unique in its identification of conceptual bases for the proposed uses of the professional work in dance education. In other words, the pack proposes a rationale and methodology for in-depth teaching/learning of dance composition, performance and appreciation through use of a professional dance work as a resource. The visual dance exemplification presented on CD-ROM as digital video is accompanied by text, both on disc and in the resource pack, to explain the theory behind the tasks set for students and the methods that could be applied in the use of the resource to inform and extend practice.

The *Wild Child* pack is still popular especially in secondary education and remains highly relevant today. Surprisingly, there are still no other such interactive technology resources that feature professional works choreographed for the

³ Bedford Interactive Productions (1999), *Wild Child – an interactive CD-i resource pack for dance education*, now in CD-ROM (2001), created in collaboration with Ludus Dance. See the resource list at the back of the book for further information.

theatre. There is huge potential here but at present dance companies and choreographers are not seeking to go further than making the much cheaper DVD recordings of their works. Although there is a growing number of DVDs from these sources they are merely digital video recordings which replace video but provide easy access to the parts. There is no pedagogy in these resources so there is much catching up to do if dance education is to become resourced to make it in any way comparable with music, drama, literature and the visual arts in providing access to professional examples of creative work along with deconstruction and analysis for teaching/learning purposes. Technology now offers such opportunities to dance education.

Differences in the use of DVD and CD/DVD-ROM technologies

The shift from analogue VHS video tape towards digital video tape and disc (DVD) has occurred in dance education as it has in any other field that demands movie images to capture and play back its creative products. Obviously there are big advances in the quality of the image, yet there are disadvantages too in that every digital image frame is essentially a still so in the capture of very fast action not all of the movement can be seen.

DVD is an extremely good technology for storage of lengthy video and the picture quality is excellent. More and more dance companies are producing DVDs⁴ and this is of great benefit to teachers and students in dance education. Generally, they are cheap to buy, take up very little storage and can be played via ever cheaper DVD players through a TV. Controlling a DVD is simple and, for dance, there are advantages in stepping back, forward, fast forward and back, etc. Also, most DVDs are organised into chapters so that you can quickly access the dance piece or scene from a menu and can return to the menu at any time. (This is certainly an improvement on searching for a dance piece by fast forwarding the old video tape format.)

⁴ At the time of writing around 350 ballet and modern dance DVDs are listed in Dance Books Ltd catalogue, www.dancebooks.co.uk

However, use of DVD in the dance space has its limitations. It is somewhat difficult, for example, to show a motif or phrase of movement towards the beginning of a piece and then immediately after, show a development of the motif or phrase that occurs later in the dance. DVD is linear just as video tape was which means that you have to find the episodes whilst the students keep in their heads what they have just seen so they can compare the clips. It is possible, of course, to bookmark parts of a video and, on a computer, double click on the thumbnails to play the parts marked. Whilst this facility is very helpful, it is necessary for the teacher to have spent a great deal of time indentifying the time defined parts that are to be viewed and compared by the students and there is a limit on the number of bookmarks that can be made.

Most DVD resources for dance are straight video recordings of dance works or demonstrations of technique with voice-overs and although the above mentioned facilities make for ease of movement from part to part, there is generally no additional media to aid learning other than the video. In addition there are few DVDs that have been specifically created for use in dance education – especially those that feature professional choreography. Hence, the small inserts or booklets that accompany the discs are usually descriptions of the pieces, the music and designs with perhaps a little insight given on the choreographer's inspiration or intention and information on the dancers.⁵ Currently, in the UK anyway, apart from just a few (for example, as mentioned above, Sanders' book on Akram Khan's *Rush*) there are no teaching materials which accompany the DVDs on the market but hopefully this will be remedied in time.

A CD-ROM resource: *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition*

Moving on to discuss the more advanced technology – CD/DVD-ROM – a full description of the technology features of the disc created for both PC and Mac computers and which constitutes the core of the resource pack titled *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition*,⁶ should provide the

⁵ For example, Jiri Kylian's DVD titled *Black and White ballets*, Netherlands Dance Theatre, Arthaus Musik.

⁶ This title was authored to provide teachers and students with visual exemplification of content of this book relating to principles of form. It is currently packaged including a copy of the 5th edition. See the back of this book for details on how to purchase the pack.

reader with knowledge of the advantages offered through use of this interactive technology. The text below and the use of this book's accompanying DVD will provide a demonstration of a small range of the features in the full pack. However, it should be noted that use of a authored DVD cannot give you the same interactive experience of CD/DVD-ROM technology.

View the DVD

Access the main menu after the introduction on the DVD and select the *Choreographic Outcomes* demo. View this before, during and after reading the following text.

The CD-ROM created for *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition* (2005) is packed with videos, menus and access screens that include thumbnail movies, charts, animated drawings, animated text, pop-up screens to describe content or give information, and on-screen instructions to help the user move through the sections and layers. All the video is fully controllable by the user through on-screen see-through buttons allowing play, pause, slow-motion forwards and backwards, single frame advance forwards or retreat backwards, return to the start of whatever is in play and exit.

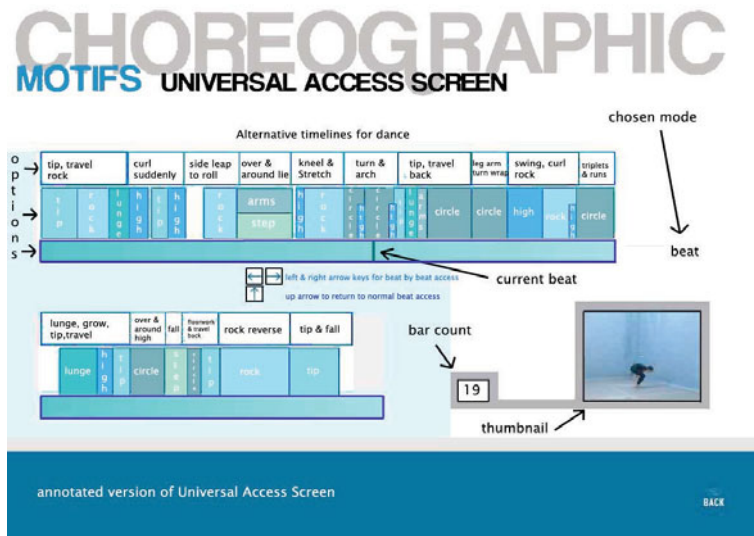
On opening the disc there are two choices: Section 1 – analysis of the source solo *Motifs for a Solo Dancer* or Section 2 – analysis of new excerpts inspired by the solo – *Choreographic Outcomes*. There are seven of these choreographic outcomes composed by three different choreographers.

A click of the mouse on the source solo (Section 1 of the disc) produces the main menu with the following choices:

- view the whole dance
- a Universal Access Screen (UAS) allows access to the whole dance – the phrases, the key motifs, each bar and beat of the dance – thereby moving between macro and micro analysis
- a library of key motifs
- time analysis – macro and micro form charts and representations of the dynamic phrase structures to demonstrate orchestration in time
- space analysis – animated floor pathways for the whole dance and super-imposed animated air pathways to demonstrate orchestration in space
- solo motifs as sources for many possible composition outcomes

Universal Access Screen

The Universal Access Screen, pictured below and on the accompanying DVD, is a multi-purpose screen for accessing video. This was invented by Bedford Interactive to supply a range of levels of access to the dance piece – *Motifs for a Solo Dancer*. Rather than several quite different screens, a more general screen offers immediately accessible options between various levels each having different purposes. Access to a full range of levels allows an integrated and rich teaching process that cannot be achieved through single purpose screens.



Access to the phrases and all other parts of the dance is made simple through the Universal Access Screen above. Viewing the whole dance is an option offered here. The options on the left of the diagram show the other levels available.

- a. Phrases
 - b. Key motifs
 - c. Bars and beats
- White top boxes Middle boxes with named motifs Bottom solid bar

A. Phrases

You can select any one of the top 15 white boxes that represent the phrases in *Motifs for a Solo Dancer*. On the disc each phrase is described in terms of its form devices, so when studying the phrases as structural elements of the whole dance it is important to note the motifs, repetitions, developments, variations and contrasts.

Clicking on a phrase box will take you immediately to a full-screen video at the point of entry to the phrase. Once in this mode there is the opportunity to play the phrase at normal speed, slow-motion forwards and backwards, loop back to the start, and so on. There are very useful on-screen indicators of where the phrase is in the dance with a gauge in the left top corner and the bar and beat counts in the bottom left corner. (See the DVD demo accompanying this book.) The freedom to move from phrase to phrase very quickly offers the opportunity for comparative analysis. Moreover, the relationship between the phrases and the key motifs below them is a really powerful dance analysis tool.

B. Key motifs

The UAS provides access to the video of 33 incidences of seven key motifs. Here again placing the cursor over a key motif box will produce a cue in the form of a representative still of the type of motif. It also provides a description of the key motif. Clicking on the key motif box will take you into the full-screen video with all the facilities as described above for phrases. Here also, there is absolute freedom to move from motif to motif and to shift between phrases and motifs to discern the relationships between them.

C. Bars and beats

The horizontal bar at the base of the key motifs extends for the duration of the dance. This bar is full of information: dragging the cursor along it will produce the bar count and at the same time show the dancer performing the piece in the thumbnail simulated movie. It is even possible to locate an exact point on this bar and, by pressing the down key on the keyboard, gain beat-by-beat access within the selected bar. This accuracy of selection is extremely useful when searching for a particular movement within a bar or phrase. Being able to see a clear picture of the dancer to check and define the point in the dance to be viewed and then being able to shift forwards or back to adjust this point is highly advantageous in detailed analysis work. Having selected the point of entry, the full-screen is regained by tapping the space bar.

Library of key motifs

A click on the library of key motifs in the main menu will take you to the library screen. Here there are seven sets of key motifs. Placing the cursor on each picture

will indicate how many versions of the motif are available to view within each set. A click on one of the sets will produce another menu of the range of the selected motif within the set. For example, a click on rocks produces a screen with five versions of the rocking motif. Each version is represented with a still and information as to which numbered rock it is and in which bar(s) it takes place. Placing the cursor onto one of these pictures activates a thumbnail simulated movie of the rock; a click on this produces the full-screen video of the motif accompanied by a text description.

This facility to isolate and undertake detailed analysis of each key motif is unparalleled in any other format. The motifs in each set have been extracted from diverse places in the dance and placed alongside each other so that the students can easily see the similarities and differences. The motifs are also presented on full-screen with authored starts and stops, and facilities to re-play, move forwards or backwards in slow-motion. Again the options to view any number within the sets, or to study full sets is available in the context of various modes of study. For example, studying the form concepts of development or variation, the library of key motifs provides access to view specific repetitions of a key motif to determine whether they can be considered developments or variations and to form an opinion as to why they are or are not such cases.

Time analysis

The main menu provides a gateway to the analysis of form as the orchestration of time in *Motifs for a Solo Dancer*. This is presented under two headings: form charts and phrase structures.

1. Form charts

There are two coloured form charts. One represents the macro structure of the piece by identifying the occurrence of its motifs, their repetitions, developments, variations and contrasts. The second shows the microstructure by determining which particular movements are repeated, developed, varied or introduced as new or contrasting motifs. These form charts are presented both on screen and in the resource pack's guidebook.

2. Phrase structures

Phrases in movement, as in speech, are patterned through use of punctuation,

emphasis and rhythm. This resource demonstrates the dynamic structure of each phrase through graphic representation of the various elements that contribute to the patterns. It also represents the rhythmic pattern in the three phrases that emphasise rhythm.

Space analysis

This part of the disc is also presented under two headings:

1. Air pathways

The aim here is to remind the dance composer that spatial patterning in the air also contributes to the form of a dance piece. Examples of three circular pathways are much enhanced on the disc in that there are superimposed curve drawings with indications of past, present and future paths in space synchronised with the dancer's movements. Such study aims to deepen students' concept of form and the part that the spatial canvas has to play in creating the form.

2. Floor pathways

It is probably more obvious that dance creates floor patterns and most composers take this into account when structuring a dance. However, access to the whole collection of floor 'maps' that constitutes a dance is not easily achieved in visual forms beyond paper. Access to floor pathways synchronised with the dancer as she moves is certainly advantageous in the study of this aspect of form. The CD-ROM provides such facilities so that the user can fully appreciate the variations of pattern in relation to the dance content and, more importantly, the interrelationship of each floor pattern to the rhythm and form of the whole.

Solo motifs as potential sources for further Choreographic Outcomes

This last option in part 1 of the disc gives students opportunities to sample the various ways in which given motifs extracted from *Motifs for a Solo Dancer* can be used as sources of content for other compositions – further solos, duos or group dances.

To access study of the solo motifs as potentials for further compositions, a click on the appropriate title in the library of key motifs will produce a split still screen menu with the original motif selected on one side and four examples of development and variation from the seven excerpts on the other side. A click on

the original motif will play it to remind the student of its content and a click on each of the four active boxes will play the developments or variations of the motifs extracted from the solo, duo or group choreographed outcomes. This allows study of how each original key motif has been developed or varied by each of the three choreographers. Moving to and fro between windows is therefore easily achieved so that comparisons can be made.

Section 2 of the CD-ROM, *Choreographic Outcomes* – study of duo, group excerpts and an alternative solo dance

On the disc there are seven choreographic outcomes created by three different choreographers who were given the task to compose short excerpts, or, in the case of the solo, a short dance study, using *Motifs for a Solo Dancer* as a source.

There are two levels of study available by viewing of these outcomes. These are as follows:

1. study of each duo, group excerpt and the solo as compositions in their own right to discern and learn about the composition devices the choreographers have employed to achieve form
2. study of the ways in which the choreographer of each outcome has developed, varied and orchestrated the original source content from *Motifs for a Solo Dancer* into new composition excerpts

The study of the first is presented on the disc through viewing each outcome as a whole and phrase-by-phrase. Access to each outcome via a click on a thumbnail takes you to a choice of viewing the whole outcome, its phrases or in comparison with the source solo. Selection of the phrase option produces another screen with thumbnails indicating the number of phrases. If the cursor is held on a phrase the movement it contains is presented and repeated in a loop. Simultaneously, it is also possible to read a description of the choreographic devices used in the phrase in a pop-up box or in summary beside the movie thumbnail. A click on the selected phrase thumbnail takes the user to a full-screen performance of the phrase which takes place with overlaid descriptions of the devices used as they occur in the dance. This affords an in-depth analysis of the form elements as the dance proceeds.

The study of the second level – how *Motifs for a Solo Dancer* has been used as source material for each of the seven outcomes – is presented as a third option on the initial menu for each choreographic outcome. The option is titled: Compare with *Motifs for a Solo Dancer*; a click on this option offers two modes of comparison.

Because there are 144 derivations out of the 33 source motifs used in the seven outcomes and a comprehensive and detailed demonstration of all of these would be an inordinate task, there is a directed mode of comparison that demonstrates a small number of simultaneous comparisons between the outcome and the source material from *Motifs for a Solo Dancer* employed by the outcome choreographer. The remaining comparisons can be made by users themselves through use of the search mode. In both modes, two video windows are provided side-by-side on the screen. The left one is for the outcome video, while the right is for the source piece. Only one of these windows can be active at a time; transfers from one to the other can be achieved by clicking anywhere on the active window.

The above description of sections 1 and 2 of the CD-ROM should explain some of the distinct advantages of this advanced technology over ordinary DVD technology. However, unlike DVDs on the market, the pack does not only contain a disc. There is a 130-page *Creative Practice Guidebook* as well as this textbook. The integral nature of all three of these components of the resource pack requires that, for best results, they should be used together.

The *Creative Practice Guidebook* explains how to use the CD-ROM, with in practical composition work in the dance studio. Obviously, the former two resources are studied sitting down watching, thinking, writing and talking about the contents on screen and/or in the text. The *Guidebook*, on the other hand, recommends that students spend only small amounts of time undertaking these sedentary study activities and large amounts of time practically engaged in dance composition tasks derived from use of the CD-ROM in particular. This is important, since the educational premise underlying the whole pack is that it is a vast toolbox that aims to deepen and broaden knowledge and understanding of the concepts and principles relating to form in dance. The pack also exposes skilful practice in dance composition through deconstructing examples of choreography and, through worksheets in the *Guidebook*, allows students to develop such skills for themselves. Moreover, through the tasks on the worksheets and/or the

teacher's or students' own inspirational use of the pack resources, there is also the possibility for them to creatively extend beyond the practice analysed on the CD-ROM.

The additional charts and analysis tools together with the appreciation and practical tasks on worksheets in the *Guidebook*, therefore play essential roles in interpreting the theory related to creating form in dance composition into meaningful and creative practice.

All the worksheets in the *Guidebook*, whether to be used practically or theoretically, are written for students. The practical worksheets generally progress from specific tasks directly related to the CD-ROM towards tasks that inspire students to use the concepts learned from the resource in their own creative work. In the former cases, students develop skills in:

- observing, identifying, classifying and discussing the features of form presented on the disc
- using these same aspects of form in their own dance composition work

In the latter case, students might respond with more freedom in applying and adapting the principles of form in their own creative work.

To these ends, the worksheets deliver two kinds of activity – appreciation and composition. Sometimes, teachers will decide to use the resource in dance theory contexts, but the recommendation is that at least 80% of its use should be in a practical working space. If there are many appreciation tasks on any given worksheet, the teacher may need to select just a few to engage the students in practical work within the time available.

There is no doubt that a specifically created DVD/CD-ROM resource, which is essentially a software program, contains many more technology features and layers of usage compared to a DVD video. The above description has attempted to explain such differences. However, no amount of text can provide the reader with anything like the real experience of using the disc which is why it was decided to include it with this edition so that some of the parameters of computer-based technology could be demonstrated.

The accompanying DVD

The DVD was created especially to provide demonstration of:

1. the CD-ROM resource pack, *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition* (2005)
2. a DVD-ROM resource pack, *Vocalise – improving dance performance* (2008)
3. a resource-based teaching and learning methodology

Both the packs in 1. and 2. above were authored by Bedford Interactive's creative team comprising two multimedia experts, Jim Schofield and Michael Schofield, and the author of this book as the dance pedagogy expert. *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition* obviously has direct relevance to teaching and learning dance composition. Indeed, as indicated above, the pack was created to specifically illustrate all the principles discussed in *Methods of construction 2–5* earlier. Hence reference will be made to this pack in the text below. The DVD extracts some of the video footage from the full resource pack to demonstrate how the interactive CD-ROM pack inspires and enhances learning within practical dance composition lessons, and how it effectively employs a resource-based teaching/learning methodology.

Vocalise – improving dance performance, Bedford Interactive's latest DVD-ROM interactive resource, is also demonstrated on the DVD because it directly relates to Section 5, new to this edition, where attention is given to rehearsing and improving performance of students' dance compositions before presentation to audiences. Reference is made to it here in Section 4 to exemplify a resource-based teaching/learning methodology. In this context, *Vocalise*, the solo dance, is used as an example of a choreographed work which can be analysed and appreciated so students learn from its composition to inform their own dance composing.

Resource-based teaching/learning – practical assignments using the DVD⁷

The following tasks in appreciation and composition, with use of the DVD, follow a similar pattern to the full CD-ROM resource pack, *Choreographic Outcomes –*

⁷ If you play the DVD on a computer it is possible that you can bookmark sections or phrases in the video as it progresses. For example, WinDVD4 allows you to create a number of bookmarked parts so that you can re-play them when needed. This is a useful facility for purposes of comparing motifs and their developments, for example.

improving dance composition, in that they focus on viewing, analysing and then using in practical dance composition the concepts and principles relating to form which are examined in *Methods of construction* 2–5. However, in order that teachers and students employ a resource-based teaching/learning methodology by using choreographed dances, part 3 of the DVD contains performance of the solo dance titled *Vocalise*⁸ choreographed by Jacqueline Smith-Autard, taking the title of the music, *Vocalise* op. 34 no. 14 composed by Rachmaninoff, and danced by Lauren Potter, and a duo choreographed by Lisa Spackman and danced by herself with Christine Francis for *Choreographic Outcomes*. The tasks relating to the latter can be found in the CD-ROM resource pack whereas the tasks relating to the former are totally original in the context of this book.

Activity 1: Motif and development (See *Methods of construction* 2, pp. 42–47)

Analysis and appreciation

Undertake the following tasks to develop an understanding of the concept of ‘motif’.

From the main menu on the DVD select practical assignments and view *Vocalise*, the solo, as many times as required

- List movements that happen more than once.
- In pairs, identify at least three of these movements that could be labelled key motifs. If possible bookmark them on the DVD so that you can quickly access the times they occur.
- Describe these key movements and comment on why you think they are key.
- Identify some of the changes that occur in the repetitions and label them as developments or variations.

⁸ As stated earlier, this solo is featured in Bedford Interactive’s DVD-ROM resource pack, *Vocalise – improving dance performance* (2008) which is demonstrated on the accompanying DVD and is discussed in Section 5 of this edition.

Teaching points

In *Vocalise*, there are movements that are repeated several times, for example, the contraction occurs twelve times, the balance in 4th ten times, the leg circle three times. Some of the repeats are the same, perhaps on the other side, but most are developments or variations. Recognition of key moves and their repetitions within a dance helps the student to appreciate the basic element of composition – ‘motif’.

Composition

- a. Working individually, explore through improvisation and then select four of the following words and create single movement motifs (bytes) to depict the wind.⁹ Practice each motif separately.

hover	dip
twist	fall
swirl	circle
skim	tip
lift	sway

- b. Create linking movements between the single movements ensuring that they are merely linking or transitions from and to each single motif and do not detract from them. Try to define the single motifs as important in your performance perhaps using accents or pauses to establish their presence in the movement ‘sentence’. (Music could be used here. However, it should not be heavily punctuated.)
- c. Now slightly alter these single movement motifs (eg, perhaps adding a change of level or direction) and present them in another ‘sentence’ (perhaps in a different order) but use the same or very similar linking/transition movements to combine them.

⁹ See pp. 94–95 in *Methods of Construction 7 – Improvisation in the process of composition* where the idea of exploring the movement concepts related to wind is introduced.

- d. Show your two 'sentences' to a partner who should identify which four movements have been selected and what has been done to alter them slightly the second time they appear. Your partner should comment on the clarity of your response to the task by answering the following question. Do the single movement motifs stand out as key motifs? Whatever the answer, perhaps you both could suggest why and, if necessary, identify how the performance could improve the identification of the key motifs.

Teaching points

The action words have rhythmic characteristics and therefore have implied quality content. Students should concentrate on these qualities to bring out the distinctive feature of each of the four movement motifs. The transitions should be very simple, eg, a step, very short travel, a moment of pause, a change of focus. Simple developments could be used the second time, eg, adding arms to the dipping action, changing the direction of the tip. If students have created four separate motifs and practised each as a separate entity before linking them, their performance should clearly define them with rhythmic and dynamic clarity.

Activity 2: Identifying and creating phrases (see *Methods of construction 2*, p. 50 and *Methods of Construction 4*, pp. 66–69)

Analysis and appreciation

- Work with a partner. View *Vocalise* for up to 19 seconds and identify two phrases. Discuss the content of each phrase – beginning, middle and end – and say why this section of movement can be seen as two phrases.
- Analyse the content of phrases 1 and 2 separately and discuss whether the movements are key motifs or linking movements. Name and label each movement.
- Now analyse the rhythmic and dynamic content of each phrase, thinking about the choreographer's use of continuity, pauses and accents.
- Identify one other distinct phrase in the solo, determining how it begins

and ends. Bookmark it to show others and analyse its rhythmic and dynamic content as above.

- Consider the above three phrases as *motifs* and view the dance to identify repetitions, developments and variations of the phrase motifs.
- Pay attention to the rhythmic and dynamic features in the phrases, ie, continuity, pauses and accents, also changes of speed – all of which provide colour to the movements.

Teaching points

The first phrase could be seen to end in the 4th position, arms high and the second phrase in the side lunge. The movements in the first phrase could be seen as preparation (triplet), key move (leg circle), linking steps into key move (contraction), linking steps into key move (balance in 4th). The rhythmic and dynamic content can be judged to be continuous with pauses in the contraction and the balance in 4th with perhaps a slight accent into the latter before holding still to create a comma between phrases 1 and 2. This first phrase can be seen again with development after the leg circle and hop turning, and again repeated exactly on the other side half way through the solo. The second phrase can also be seen at this point but it has clear developments which the students could note.

Composition

- Work individually, select one description from the two listed below and create a phrase motif including at least two ‘commas’ or ‘semi-colons’ within the phrase.
 - travel, twist, turn, drop down and stretch up, step into a leg whipping action, fall and rise up
 - rise, swoop with travel, stretch high into fall, slide into rise up, swing, turn
- Perform the phrase motif to the same partner as for the Activity 1 composition tasks. The observer should look for the ‘punctuation’ and

comment on the sense of continuity within the phrase. It should appear as a phrase rather than a series of shorter motifs even if, for analysis purposes, it could be broken down into separate motifs.

Note: Ultimately, it is up to the composer to decide where the motifs begin and end. Viewers need not know exactly, except that they should be able to discern key or foundational motifs so that they can appreciate the repetitions, developments, contrasts and so on as aspects of the form of the whole.

- c. Now, keeping the theme of wind in mind, add the phrase motif to the motifs created for your previous work in Activity 1. Video your performance and present it with a graphic representation of the motifs to demonstrate your understanding of the possibilities for variable lengths – single movement motifs and phrases of movement motifs.

Teaching points

Students should be able to describe the single move motifs and the phrase motif in terms of varied lengths of motifs identified in *Methods of construction 2* and design in time referred to in *Methods of construction 4*. Although the motifs are merely organising devices for the choreographer, the audience should be able to 'read' them by noting the punctuation. Students should identify continuity, pauses, accents, accelerations/decelerations, changes of force and rhythmic features – perhaps creating graphics on paper such as on p. 72. The time design of the sequence in the dance so far should be evaluated in review of the students' own video performance.

Further practical activities using the DVD

The teacher may decide to change the focus at this point onto the spatial features of the students' above composition. (See *Methods of construction 2*, pp. 51–54)

Tasks to view a small section of *Vocalise* using the control buttons to find particular still body positions would be useful to study alignment in relation to a stage front. This appreciation work could preface consideration of each student's own motifs to define moments where alignment could be enhanced by slight

changes of direction of facing and by placement and feeling of line and shape in their own body. Taking digital photos, placing them on the computer then drawing lines through or across the body can be a useful learning device here.

Similarly, tasks to discern and analyse floor pathways and perhaps one air pathway in *Vocalise* (for example, immediately after the first development of phrase 1, the turn from arms high in 4th taking the right arm in a pathway from high through a medium level side position to diagonally back and high ending position creates a distinct air pathway) could precede work on the students' own sequences focusing on these elements of spatial design. Again reference to pages 51–54 would help clarify their study.

Activity 3: using a resource to extract movement ideas for a duo

Analysis and appreciation

From the main menu on the DVD select practical assignments and view Lisa's Duo 1 as many times as required to determine your ideas on how the excerpt can be divided into phrases for the purpose of analysis and extraction of movement ideas for composition.

Now, in the phrases menu, view each phrase on the DVD in turn to see how the author has divided the excerpt into phrases. Read the content of each phrase as you view:

Phrase 1 (Introduction 4 bars)

Start dancer A and B side by side A lifted by B.

B wraps A across body. A turns away from B then performs high leg circlce outwards with R leg into up and over motif. L leg up to end behind B.

B turns to L half turn then another half, lifts and lowers R arm.

A pushes B to her R. B gallops to side.

Phrase 2 (4 bars)

A steps sideways into both arms lift and lower then steps into B using up and over arm action with L to hold onto B. In lift takes 4th position of legs curving around B.

B performs circular leg/arm action with turn into up and over arms R.L on jump, then lifts A and turns to R.

Phrase 3 (8 bars)

A lowers into sideways tucked roll ending in leg stretch to side L. B performs full turn with L leg bent behind arms in diagonal.

Both turn back on themselves A reversing roll to get up. B turning into up over motif with leg lift.

Both travel into step pattern with hop turn leg bent behind arms in diagonal then take R to side lunge developed with turn. Repeat with gallop in towards each other.

Phrase 4 (8 bars)

A throws B to R side into gallop side step as repeat of move in phrase 1 then a jump turns R with two arms circling inwards elbows bent.

A then tips sideways L is caught by B who pushes her away. B extends the push into an up and over motif both arms high. A repeats up and over motif with a turn.

A rolls into B's arms and B lifts A who performs a circle of leg but outward this time.

Both repeat outward leg circle whilst continuing to turn and circle out from each other.

Phrase 5 (8 bars)

Both do step hop turn development towards each other in opposition land and lower into sitting roll stand and wrap in opposition. Unwrap into curving travel.

A performs a R arm and leg circle in bending the knee at end. B follows with the same but L.

A side gallop towards B with high extended arms. B ditto.

A side gallop into step hop repeat of up over motif as in phrase 1 – step to side.

B side gallop (miss out up/over motif) side step to catch up into unison.

Phrase 6 (16 bars plus the ending)

Both take side step with drop into half turn pull back and stand, extend head. Travel in circle outer arm circling back and over the top. Continue to circle towards each other with scissor kick in front

in close to both perform leg change jump in bent position behind, land and continue turn into side leap facing each other into hop turn with left leg circling round outwards. Both continue travel then stop, turn and look back at each other over L shoulder.

Travel backwards spiraling in one continuous turn. A turns back on herself into a drop forwards on R whilst B performs high leg circle inwards as in phrase 1 to get to same position as A.

A takes outward circle action with R leg whilst B turns to match A's step into walks to RFC with circle of L then R arms elbows bent to walk and exit.

Teaching points

In the first appreciation task it is not easy for students to analyse the video on a DVD but use of the slow-motion and bookmark facilities should help to isolate the phrases. Obviously this task is completed in the following activity but it would be helpful to compare and discuss the differences. The purpose of undertaking such analysis is to ensure that students observe detail in the resources they use so that they can learn from them and use them as sources for their own composition work. Once they have observed and noted the actions, qualities, use of space and relationships in a dance they should be able to extract ideas to use as a basis for their own explorations. The above descriptions are merely outlines as they do not give detail of all the content. However, they should help the students to identify and follow the content of each phrase so that they can undertake the following composition tasks.

Composition

- a. Select a piece of music or a sound track and create a duo using some of the movement ideas in Lisa's Duo 1 in part 3 of the DVD, especially the separate phrases. The duo could be based on a theme such as 'Play', 'An Argument' or even the same as for the above activities, a 'Windy Day' which could ultimately lead to a longer dance combining both the solo and duo work. Obviously the dynamic and relationship content will vary according to the idea but motifs should emerge from the following explorations.

- b. Work in twos to explore the following contact relationships taken from Lisa's Duo 1:
- the lifting starting position in phrase 1 – if this is difficult find an alternative position in which one partner takes the weight of the other off the floor
 - throw off from this hold – into different directions
 - pushing movements – shifting your partner – sideways, forwards or backwards (see examples in phrase 1, and 4 where there are two)
 - lift and turn. There are all sorts of movements that can be done here. Try the lift and turn in phrase 2 and phrase 4 of Lisa's Duo 1 but others too
 - the roll into the arms in phrase 4
 - the turning jump in contact in phrase 6 and others you can invent
- c. From the above exploration compose two phrases of your own movements using the following contact motifs:

lift	lift and turn
throw	roll into
push	turning-jump

- d. Now create some turning movements together. Take some ideas from Lisa's Duo 1 as follows:
- turn inwards initiated by a leg circling in action (Dancer B phrase 2)
 - turn inwards (pirouette) keeping the other leg held in position (phrase 3 end)
 - turn by rolling on the floor sideways (Dancer A phrase 3)
 - turning outwards on one foot the other leg behind (Dancer B x 2 phrase 3)
 - watch phrase 4 and extract turns resulting from contact movements. Try adding turns resulting from your Push, Throw and Roll into. Make the movement flow and appear logical
- e. Compose four turning actions then develop or change them by adding hops, legs and arm positions or directions. This will result in you having the four initial turning movements and their respective developments to add to the vocabulary of your duo.

- f. To explore travel in curving pathways view phrase 5 and using running only, copy the travel forwards on opposite sides of a circular pathway in unison in opposition to meet then turn into unison leading and following but going backwards to end away from each other on a diagonal. Carry on into phrase 6 and copy the pathways travelling forwards into a movement turning close then travel out to the diagonal again and then backwards into the spiral to end side by side facing the RDC. You should learn these pathways and changes of directions in order to utilise them in your duo.
- g. Video the composition outcomes of c., e., and f., above and write a description of each of these composition snippets identifying how they express the theme. Retain these snippets for use in Activity 4.

Activity 4: Development and variation of motifs and orchestration of the duo in time and space (see *Methods of construction 3*)

Analysis and appreciation

Identify and note the following developments and variations of motifs and time orchestration devices in Lisa's Duo 1.

- Phrase 1:** key motifs – wrap across, leg circle, up and over leg bent at the back, push and gallop sideways
repetition and development of wrap
- Phrase 2:** repetition and development of B's one arm lift and lower in phrase 1
repetition of circular leg action and up and over action
development of circular pathway
- Phrase 3:** B extracts and varies the leg position from the turning lift in phrase 2
adding arms in diagonal
complementary action
repetition of some previous movements
unison and development of the turn with legs in 4th
- Phrase 4:** repetition and development of the previous actions – wrap, up and over action
canon
development of the wrap turning in rather than out

development of leg circle action with wrap
echo of the move at the start in opposition

Phrase 5: unison in opposition

development of previous actions
development of actions from previous phrases
canon into unison

Phrase 6: unison in opposition

development of curving pathway and step pattern into big circle
development and variation of the turn lift
unison in opposition continued
canon development of wrap unison and repetition of arms

Now select three of the above phrases and identify spatial features under the following headings:

- direction of facing
- direction of moving
- change of levels
- spatial relationship – facing, one behind other etc

Composition

- a. Recall and revise the composition snippets c., e., and f. in Activity 3 above.
- b. Now use all this vocabulary in any order to create the beginnings of a duo expressing your chosen theme:

- Two phrases of contact movements.
- Four different turning actions and their developments.
- The travel in curving pathways set motifs in phrases 5 and 6 of Lisa's Duo 1.

It would probably be wise to decide on a starting motif – perhaps one of the contact moves – and then to feel what should come next – perhaps one of the turns into another contact move.

Continue the composition by:

- c. Repeating and developing all the movements.
- d. Use the curving pathways motif as a contrast at least twice – developing and varying it the second time.
- e. Employ the turning actions as both motifs and transitions.
- f. Use unison and canon doing the same movement and in opposition, also include complementary actions.
- g. Incorporate the spatial variations studied above.
- h. Once the duo has been created, polished and practiced, video it ready to undertake the evaluation task in Activity 5 below.

Activity 5: discerning the form of the solo dance *Vocalise* (see *Methods of construction 5*)

Analysis and appreciation

The following tasks are difficult using a DVD but with practice and use of slow-motion students should be able to undertake them and thereby gain a better understanding of the concepts and principles discussed in *Methods of construction 5*.

View *Vocalise*, the solo in the practical assignments section of the DVD.

- Consider the first motif as the triplet into turn with leg circle and contraction. Watch it several times.
- Track this set of moves through the dance to see it occur another three times and create a chart to show the developments and variations of it. Note changes of order or mere extraction of one move too.
- Now track and create a chart for the step into 4th position out of the contraction in phrase 1 of the dance as a single key move that is repeated, developed and varied another seven times. Note that you are looking at the step into the 4th position only.
- Select two other key moves (for example, the side lunge, arabesque, arm gesture backwards) and create a chart to describe the developments, changes in spatial orientation and any other features you think relevant.
- Study the two times that the dancer moves on the floor. Are these straight repetitions? If not how is the second time developed and varied. Do you agree that these two phrases constitute contrasts in the

dance? If so say why. Is there any other phrase that you would classify as a contrast? If so state why and whether or not you would consider any of these contrasts as highlights/climaxes too.

- Compare and contrast the ending of the dance with the beginning. Discuss with a partner how some of the moves are used again, interspersed with others, and the order of them.
- Comment on the role of all the above elements – repetitions, developments, variations, contrasts, highlights/climaxes in creating a unified form for the dance. Also, without watching the dance, listen to the music to discern the same elements and then discuss how the dance composition and music relate.

Teaching points

Students should discover the differences in each repetition of movements and chart them accordingly. For example, the leg circle in phrase 1 when seen again is developed with turns and a hop with a high leg circling and arms added. The 4th position is first developed with an extra step and arm extension and on other occasions with no arms up. Their charts should show detail of these differences and could usefully indicate not only action changes but spatial variations too. The discussion of contrasts and highlights/climaxes should be undertaken with visual reference to the DVD so that students themselves use the technical features available to make their point to others in the class. Comparing and contrasting the ending with the beginning of the dance should generate ideas such as retrograde and re-echo of former moments to create a coda and how this is similar to the music. The discussion of the overall form in relation to the music might identify phrasing, dynamic and rhythmic patterning of the parts that make up the unified whole. Clearly the use of form elements, motifs, developments etc. create this unity. Hopefully, this appreciation work will inform the students' future practice in composing dances.

Composition

- a. Analyse the video of your duo composition and formulate questions on a feedback sheet to give to another pair. The questions should require that the

respondents evaluate the duo as a formed whole making reference to the devices examined in the above analysis and appreciation of *Vocalise*. The following checklist and reference to *Methods of construction 5* will help.

- key moves as motifs
 - phrase motifs
 - repetitions, developments and variations
 - contrasts
 - highlights/climaxes
 - logical development of the parts into the whole
- b. Examine the responses to your evaluation questions and work with your partner to consider these and your own ideas in order to write an evaluation of the form of your duo.

Resource-based teaching/learning using new technologies¹⁰

Through the above resource-based teaching/learning methodology by the end of the above activities which are intended to simulate a few of the activities students experience using the CD-ROM resource pack, students will have learned and applied composition skills that help to achieve form. Starting from visual dance examples and undertaking analysis and appreciation tasks to describe, analyse and ultimately show understanding of the concepts and principles embedded in them, students are subsequently encouraged to use these concepts and principles of form in the their own ways in composition tasks. Hence, rather than being taught, students learn for themselves. The value of reference to a CD/DVD-ROM resource in this learning cannot be over stated. The teacher's role here is one of guide and facilitator so that students' responses to the appreciation and composition tasks are appropriate, comprehensive, individually creative, and show depth of understanding. There are no answers given in the pack. Although most of the above appreciation answers can be judged right or wrong by the teacher, when it comes to the

¹⁰ Some of the ensuing text was first published in 'Creativity in dance education through use of interactive technology resources' in *Contemporary Choreography: a critical reader*, edited by Jo Butterworth and Liesbeth Wilschut: Routledge, 2009.

students' own creative composition responses, the teacher and the students themselves should formulate criteria to evaluate them. Clearly, the criteria in terms of understanding concepts of form will be derived from the content of the composition examples on the CD-ROM, but what constitutes a creative use of this understanding emerges through the teacher's and students' own views and values.

Guided through the use of the CD-ROM and the accompanying books in the resource pack, students should develop objective knowledge and skills that include understanding that motifs can be as short as a single movement or can be much longer such as a phrase. They will learn how to link and dynamically phrase their movements, develop motifs and also how to orchestrate their motifs for two dancers in time and in space. In the duo, they may also learn that complementary action is achieved through simultaneous presentation of the original motif and its development.

Taking account of the nature of the creative process as discussed in Section 3 it is important to note that along with the above objective learning and acquisition of skills there is also the opportunity for subjective creative input. Given a theme, students explore their chosen single actions and ways in which they can be linked with dynamic and spatial variation. They can then explore different ways in which these moves can be developed, perhaps taking and adapting some ideas from the DVD but also finding their own ways. In orchestrating their motifs in twos they can creatively use the given list of devices in time and space in an organic way so that all duos in one class demonstrate different solutions to the same creative problem.

In Activities 3 and 4 there is constant interaction with the example duo composition on the DVD to note complex use of development and variation through extraction of parts, addition, inversion and so on. There is also analysis of the variety of ways a single move – the turn – is performed in the video duo, followed by practical exploration of each of the different turns and adaptation of these with the students' own lifts, throws and rolls into movements. This demonstrates a depth in exploration which should inform students of the potential for exploration in other movement contexts. Composition task f. in Activity 3 requires students to extract and learn a phrase of movement from the duo. The inclusion of part of the repertoire, in this instance, creates a contrast of material to be incorporated in the students' own duo. It is anticipated that they would appreciate this subtle input and learn the need for contrast in a duo which consists mostly

of very close relationship movements. All of this and the appreciation and evaluation work in Activity 5 constitutes the objective learning and development of skills that is designed to take place through use of the resource pack.

As indicated in Section 3, keeping a balance between the objective and subjective in teaching/learning dance composition is difficult but is also exciting and rewarding. The aim of the *Choreographic Outcomes* CD-ROM resource pack is to develop students' knowledge about and skills in creating form in their dances through the use of technology, it is also hoped that the use of the pack will feed the intuitive/feeling side of the process through the viewing and study of well-made dance composition examples on the CD-ROM. Demonstration of principles and concepts relating to form in dance composition, previously presented by a teacher and in book form only, certainly promotes learning that can be applied into the students' own work. It is important to point out that 'this and the other Bedford Interactive resource packs constitute invaluable toolboxes that underpin paradigms for dance education' (Cook, 2005, p. 139) – in this case relating to traditional practices in achieving form in dance composition. To this end, students are covertly presented with tools for analysis of the visual content on the DVD and are then set tasks so that they can apply the concepts and principles gained in such analysis work to their own dance making and performing. The resource pack, therefore, is not instructional and:

... is no "plug in and play" program. It is a sophisticated, deeply intelligent, effortful endeavour ... [I]t embeds many important educational insights and practices into the very fabric of the program.

(Warburton, 2005, p. 93)

This reviewer clearly appreciates the intention to provide flexible, intuitive material that feeds both knowledge and imagination. Teachers' use of such technology with classes in practical dance studios – through distance-based learning modules – through self-directed responses to the tasks set on accompanying worksheets or in text on screen, will determine its value in dance education in the twenty-first century. As Risner and Anderson (2008) affirm:

In dance technology education, there is a unique set of opportunities to present innovation in the context of tradition that

might increasingly reaffirm creativity, discipline, and the centrality of the body in motion . . . Dance is particularly well suited, given its visual and kinaesthetic grounding, for leading these kinds of innovative technological approaches.

(Risner and Anderson, 2008, pp. 119, 123)

Specifically written to aid teaching and learning in dance composition and to demonstrate how ‘the integration of dance pedagogy and technology (in) content-rich teaching resources’ (Cook, 2005, p. 140) can enhance the students’ learning, *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition* (2005) constitutes a flagship.

However important the content of the pack might be in delivering multiple visual exemplifications of the theory relating to creating form, the fact that it uses a technology beyond linear video – even DVD, also appropriately extends the resource-based teaching methodology into the future.

This implies that the rationale for discussion of the multimedia resource featured in this section is two-fold. First, it has offered readers a chance to imagine and see through the demonstration on the DVD of how technology can advance practice in the teaching of dance composition referenced by professional dance works. Second, it demonstrates how comprehensive and inventive applications of multimedia can expose the intricacies of choreography for study purposes. Through an embedded, resource-based teaching/learning methodology, students are guided to discover these intricacies and learn from them to extend their own dance composition.

Dance education obviously needs many such resources. It is essential that professional companies and artists focus on new technologies to develop multimedia resources for future teaching. Certainly, the teaching of dance composition should become transformed in the next decade or so if this happens.

Section 5

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Resource-based teaching/learning – dance performance

Practical assignments in improving performance through the use of new technologies with reference to the accompanying DVD

Performance to deepen understanding of composition

Performing dances created by the composer, by others in the group or those choreographed by professional choreographers is an important means of deepening learning in dance composition. Increasingly, as with music and drama, students are engaged and examined in performing dances as part of dance education syllabuses for schools, colleges and universities. These performances are assessed by criteria of physical skill and performance qualities of the students as performing dance artists. This is understandable in that performance constitutes a strong component in most syllabuses which also include composition and appreciation.¹ However, if dance education is to be truly integrated, there should be opportunities for students to learn more about composition through both the appreciation (which often includes study of professionally choreographed works²) and performance components. The latter, as discussed in Section 4, will occur

¹ See the *Introduction* to this book.

² The UK based AQA GCSE 2009 syllabus lists ten dance works from which each centre has to choose two to study in detail. In addition to a written paper, candidates are required to create a short solo based on three motifs extracted from one of the works and to perform in a group dance showing a strong relationship to another of the set works and choreographed by the teacher or a dance artist.

through the use of a resource-based teaching/learning methodology in which professional choreography presented on DVD or CD/DVD-ROM, is deconstructed and employed to teach students aspects of dance composition, sometimes, though not often enough, through practical experience of performing snippets of repertoire. This approach is becoming increasingly used in dance education today. Yet there is little evidence of teaching and learning of composition through analysis of the dances that students are required to perform for examinations or assessments or that they perform in concerts.

It is contended here that even if the only motivation is to improve performance of a dance with a singular focus on scoring well in terms of performance criteria, attention needs to be given to the composition of the piece so that students can interpret it appropriately. Hence, as in the case of a drama student taking part in a play, knowledge of the role of the character in the context of the whole, the plot and sub-plots and overall style including the historical/cultural context and the structure of the piece is important knowledge to acquire so that performance is enhanced. Even though, from their point of view, performance is generally considered the most important element of students' study, there is lack of focus on such knowledge underpinning performance. In dance also, beyond those that teach technique, there are few resources that will help students to improve performance of dances *per se*.³

Aims of this section

This new section⁴ aims to provide teachers and students with methods of teaching and learning choreographed dances so that students achieve excellence in performance of them and learn more about composition through this process. The methods include those related to analysis, deconstruction, reconstruction, rehearsal and improvement of performance of dances. In the context of using the DVD-ROM resource pack, *Vocalise – improving dance performance*, the video of the solo dance performance much enhanced with technology aids can be used

³ *Vocalise – improving dance performance* DVD-ROM resource pack 2008 is the first of its kind. This is discussed in depth in this section and is demonstrated on the accompanying DVD.

⁴ The Section uses some of the text and the methodologies presented in *Vocalise – improving dance performance resource book* (Smith-Autard, 2008) which was published by Bedford Interactive Productions as part of the DVD ROM resource pack of the same title.

to achieve this aim, but the main intention of the resource pack is for teachers and students to become sufficiently conversant with the methods so that they can apply them to the teaching and learning of any dance piece.

Description of *Vocalise*, choreographed by Jacqueline Smith-Autard (1996)

Vocalise – the solo dance featured on the DVD-ROM in the resource pack – takes the same title as the music. Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* op.34 no. 14 was selected by the choreographer because of its lyrical, flowing quality and its varied use of time divisions. Changes in time signature, differing emphasis on beats within the bars, many tied notes and extensions through ornaments produce a sense of continuity and fluid shifts in phrasing of the dance. These features inspired choreography of a dance that encapsulates a classic-modern style. The word classic here refers to a style which comes from influence of some of the founders of modern dance – Graham and Cunningham in particular, perhaps. It might also refer to some characteristics of classical ballet merging into the style. Obviously then, both the music and the solo dance are intended to meld into a traditional classical mode of performance and this requires the dancer to demonstrate control, sustained balance, fluid smooth travel and mostly a slow continuous quality. The dancer of the solo, Lauren Potter, is an exemplary demonstrator of such qualities.

The solo was choreographed for students who have already mastered basic modern dance skills. It can be described as an intermediate level dance suitable for those who are in their final two years of dance education at secondary school or in further education college, or, in their first or second year of university dance education. It might also suit intermediate modern dance students in dance schools or conservatoires.

The range of dance skills, with their implicit expressive and aesthetic performance qualities, that will be developed in students who learn and improve performance of *Vocalise*, are identified gradually as they progress through the processes on the worksheets in the resource book. Learning and improving performance of the dance is constantly made by reference to and appreciation of the supreme dancing presented on video on the DVD-ROM.

Methods of improving dance performance

Defining methods of teaching and learning to improve dance performance and writing criteria of assessment for the performance of set dances for examinations or modules of study, has proved an interesting challenge since development and examination of practical dance skills, by tradition, has been in the form of students performing technique class exercises and set sequences of movement such as adage and allegro enchainments in ballet. Clearly, performing a dance requires skills related more to a performance rather than a classroom: not only physical and technical skills should be assessed but also interpretive skills too.

The current specification for the high school Advanced Level examination⁵ in England and Wales, for example, demonstrates this concern by assessing:

The ability to perform and interpret dance ideas, through solo performance, demonstrating an understanding of appropriate technical and expressive skills and of safe practice.

And states that this will be evident in the:

- articulate and efficient use of bodily skill
- eloquent control of space
- eloquent use of dynamics to embody the specific dance idea
- clear use of focus to communicate the dance idea
- informed and appropriate projection of the dance idea

In the new specification for the GCSE Level examination in England and Wales for 2010⁶ onwards – in Unit 3 – *Performance in a duo/group dance* – it is stated that:

. . . Candidates will perform in a group dance that relates to a professional work from the prescribed list. Three clear links with the chosen professional work must be demonstrated.

⁵ <http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/gce/pdf/AQA-2230-W-SP-10.PDF> AQA AS and A Level Specification 2009/10 accessed 11/10/2009

⁶ <http://store.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/pdf/AQA-4230-W-SP-10.PDF> AQA GCSE Specification 2010, pages 10 and 13 accessed 11/10/2009

This list of example links include: choreographic style, dance style, recognisable action content or motifs. The syllabus goes on to say that:

The performance should be choreographed by a teacher/dance artist in collaboration with the candidates.

Obviously the teacher/dance artist would need to undertake choreographic analysis of the selected work so that the piece created for students to perform relates to the professional work. (Use of approaches in Section 4 of this book would certainly be beneficial here). However, students' work to prepare for this assessment of performance also signals a new approach in that alongside learning to perform the dance it will be necessary to investigate the selected practitioner's work to demonstrate understanding of the relationship between the dance to be performed and the original choreography on which it is based. To undertake such a task demands that students develop skills of analysis to distill the essence of the movement content, including recognisable techniques used, and any other aspects employed from the original professional work and, moreover, that they discern ways in which they can demonstrate their understanding of such characteristics through their own performance.

This approach has long been in practice in the tertiary education sector since, for the most part, in the UK at least, students are not generally assessed in technique class work alone. Rather, they learn and perform set pieces from repertoire or choreographed by the lecturer or by a dance artist. Assessment criteria are normally similar to those for the A level above but, in the case of repertoire, there would be the need for students to demonstrate knowledge of the piece in the context of the choreographed whole with a focus on understanding expression, style and genre. Of course at this level the skills required of the dancer are much more demanding. However, the attention given to the choreographer's movement content – use of dynamics, rhythm, phrasing, spatial features, use of music, use of choreographic devices and the form – and to the ways in which the idea for the dance can be expressed, should lead towards an individual interpretation of the piece. As part of the assessment in higher education, students are often required to write or speak about and justify their approaches to interpreting the dance.

Clearly, assessment of dance performance in secondary and tertiary education

has changed in the last thirty years. Yet, in my view, approaches to teaching and learning have not changed sufficiently since there is still an emphasis on the traditional approaches which means that students are being 'short changed' in developing full understanding of the pieces they perform.

Traditional approaches

It is common knowledge that the traditional method of teaching a set dance is to have the students copy a teacher or dance artist who performs it first. Once the students have learned a phrase or section of the dance following the teacher (usually behind him or her), the teacher usually stands back, watches and comments on the students' performance and determines ways in which to correct it, often through breaking down and practising parts and then building to the whole. This method can be very successful but it relies almost totally on the teacher's performance and interpretation as exemplification of the end product – excellence in performance. Even if students are encouraged to work with each other to improve, the images and understanding of the dance that they have are based upon the teacher's performance – perhaps supplemented with a demonstration on video/DVD.⁷ The latter can be of great value if the featured performer presents the piece in line with the original choreographic intention and features a highly competent dancer. However, the video/DVD performance is normally a linear presentation which is difficult to analyse and there are no value added features that can be compared to the DVD-ROM resource pack, *Vocalise – improving dance performance* described below and demonstrated on the DVD.

New approaches enhanced by use of technology

It is proposed here that the quality of the learning of a dance and the degree to which the student becomes cognitively, artistically and aesthetically engaged in the physical process determines the ultimate quality of the performance. For too long now, the dance teaching profession has relied upon traditional practices associated with dance technique classes in which students are denied a voice and are expected to obey instructions provided

⁷ For example, AQA – the exam board for GCSE and A Level Dance in England – provides a DVD video performance from the front and back of the dance.

by the teacher who is master of the art form. Such pedagogy needs to change so that students learn how to direct their own learning and rehearsing of dances so they might truly 'get inside' each performance through making it their own.

As defined in school examination syllabuses and university assessments in many parts of the world, performance in the performing arts – music, drama and dance – requires interpretation of the score or script. It is this interpretation that exposes individuality of artistry. However, to reach the level of performance that integrates both accuracy of rendition in terms of the choreographed dance and an individual artistic interpretation, students need to develop their performance skills far beyond mere acquisition of the technique and the ability to reproduce the given steps in the dance.

Performers do not become excellent in a vacuum, however. They need models, examples of good practice to aspire towards – not to copy but to come to appreciate and learn from so that they may apply similar techniques or principles to their own performances. The performance of *Vocalise* provides such a model – an exemplary performance of a modern solo dance. However, it is not only access to a superb video performance of a piece that is required. Teachers and their students also need tools of analysis to enable them to analyse and deconstruct the dances to be learned. They also need to develop strategies and techniques that will ensure successful reconstruction of each dance to be performed so that individual students demonstrate excellence in dance skill, clarity of understanding of the piece and individual artistry in interpretation. The resource pack offers such techniques and strategies, some of which are used in the practical assignments below.

A DVD-ROM resource: *Vocalise* – improving dance performance

The resource book which accompanies the DVD-ROM described below offers teachers and students a comprehensive methodology towards learning dances and improving performance of them. The aims of the book, used with the DVD-ROM, are as follows:

1. To develop students' abilities to:

- analyse and appreciate the dances that they learn
- deconstruct the content, form, use of music, style and expression contained in the dances to discern appropriate methods of reconstructing them
- determine the skills required to learn and improve performance of the dances and to develop effective strategies to master them
- undertake the above through student-directed tasks and monitor and evaluate their own learning and performance

2. To assist teachers to:

- provide analysis, physical practice and evaluation tasks to guide students' own practice in learning and improving performance of dances
- guide and extend students' skills and give students feedback and support in the above processes
- develop strategies that will promote students' abilities to apply the above methodologies to learning and improving performance of any given dances

To achieve these ends, the book is structured into worksheets that address each aspect of learning and improving performance of the dance on the DVD-ROM, *Vocalise*. Students who use this process should achieve a good performance of the dance. They will be able to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the piece in their performance, by talking or writing about it. All this learning is transferable to the learning of other pieces.

Because the aim of the pack is to provide teachers and students with an approach of deconstruction and reconstruction that can be applied to the teaching and learning of *any* dance piece, all of the worksheets culminate in a template. Each template is intended to build up students' abilities to perform any other solo dance piece. Whilst the worksheets address each aspect of developing the student's ability to perform *Vocalise* well, the templates define methods and questions for each of these aspects that can be applied to any other dance. In other words, the techniques of analysis, deconstruction and reconstruction have been distilled from one exemplar to serve other instances of teaching and learning dances.

As in all other Bedford Interactive packs, the worksheets have been written to

support student-based learning but the teacher is central to this whole process. Since most of the work will take place in a dance studio with a sizable group of students, the teacher clearly needs to organise and guide the learning. It is also important that the teacher encourages depth and breadth of learning through extending and enriching students' answers to the tasks set on the worksheets. The teacher's observation of progress or difficulties is crucial if the resource pack is to contribute to effectively improving students' performance.

The difference in teaching through use of technology alongside worksheets and templates is that the teacher works simultaneously as teacher and learner bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience, perhaps sharing this with the students. It can be a rewarding 'learning together' experience but throughout the process the teacher should be careful not to take control out of the students' hands completely. The aim here is to develop each student's own ability to analyse, deconstruct, reconstruct, practise and perfect his or her own performance. Certainly the teacher's guidance is of importance throughout the process. Teaching points are given in the worksheets – especially in instances of evaluation – but there may be occasions when a backward step is required while students gain from finding their own solutions.

The methods of teaching and learning dance performance promoted in the resource pack comply with the midway model approach defined in my book, *The Art of Dance in Education*, 2002. Each worksheet contains viewing and appreciating tasks that lead towards informed practice, performance and evaluation tasks. Obviously, the former tasks require detailed viewing and analysis of the dancer's performance on the DVD-ROM.

View part 2 of the DVD before, during and after reading the following text.

The DVD-ROM, *Vocalise – improving dance performance*, provides instant and interactive access to:

- a *viewing* or the front view of the dancer – performance mode
- a *learning* or back view of the dancer
- *optional* views of the dancer from angles or in close-up by a double screen simultaneous presentation with various options to loop, go on or repeat the phrase

- accompanying simultaneous *dance notation* of the movements
- accompanying *music notation* in synchrony with the dance
- on screen animated *floor pathways* matching the movement on a floor grid
- on screen beat, bar counts and animated horizontal time bar
- a *dance phrase* menu bar allowing immediate access to any phrase and a text description of its content

All these options can be variously controlled with the mouse via buttons described below.

On opening *Vocalise* on the DVD-ROM, the *front* view performance is presented with an option to access control buttons offering play, pause, slow-motion forward and back, advanced or stopped, by depressing and releasing the button, single frame moves forward and backwards and loop back to the start. There are additional buttons that jump forwards or backwards a few moments from the current move in the dance, which are useful in finding parts within the whole dance. In this full screen front view there is also access to an animated 'map' which reveals the floor pathways created by the dancer as she moves within a grid on the floor.

A click on the *learn* mode button takes the user to the back view of the dancer so that students can follow the dancer projected on screen at the front of the studio. Here the access and control buttons are the same as for the front view except that there are additional option views to choose from. These options flash up as the dance progresses so that if, for example, it would help to see a close-up of the feet in a particular phrase of movement, selection of this view is possible. There are nine optional views generated from camera positions: front view – centre, right front corner, left front corner, lower body, close-up on the body, top of the body; back view – top and lower body. There is also an overhead option view for floor work sections of the dance.

Once an option has been selected the user is taken to a double screen with the option selected on the left and the *back* reference view on the right. During the double screen presentation the user can click on the full screen caption so that the option is presented in a larger window. Here, the reference view can be dragged anywhere on the screen or out of the way. A click on back to split screen

will do exactly this. If a front option is selected the viewer will see the phrase from both back and front views simultaneously. Since these were obviously shot on separate occasions, there are moments of time synchrony that differ. The dancer demonstrates individual interpretations of the use of the music at these moments both of which are acceptable in performances of excellence. The option screen provides a text description of the phrase – details of its time frame both on the horizontal bar and in minutes and seconds within the dance as a whole – and the symbol indicating which option has been selected. There are also facilities to repeat the option in a loop as many times as required, or to return and move onto the phrase under review or the next phrase.

The on screen *horizontal time bar* has a moving indicator showing the user where in the time frame of the dance the current movement takes place. It also allows the user to choose *phrases* (phrase menu) in the dance by selecting a phrase in the bottom open row. A drag of the mouse from left to right highlights the phrase number and its description in the text underneath. The user can freely and immediately move from phrase to phrase by clicking on this animated indicator. In addition, time indications – the minutes and seconds provides an on-screen chronology of the dance which lasts for three minutes and fifteen seconds. The bars and beats appear in the bottom left hand corner of the screen.

The dance notation button takes you directly to a screen in the current part of the dance which displays the Labanotation score synchronised to the back view of the dancer. Each bar of the notation is highlighted as the dancer progresses and this obviously matches the numerical bar counts. Again the user can use the horizontal time bar to access any of the phrases in any order and see the phrase description on screen. Of course, the slow-motion control allows detailed analysis of the dancer's movements in relation to the notated score.

The music notation button takes you directly to a screen in the current part of the dance which displays the cello score synchronised with the back view of the dancer. Again, each bar is highlighted as the dancer progresses with a clear pointer to show the bar number at the beginning of the displayed part of the score.

Obviously all the above features provide flexible access to all parts of the dance in any order to help students resolve learning problems such as accuracy of the sequencing of movements and body co-ordinations, timing, rhythm, phrasing and dynamic content in relation to the music and spatial positioning and

movement. The worksheets in the resource book provide tasks in all these areas and take the student further in analysis and deconstruction of the form, expression and style to help develop a personal interpretation of the whole.

The method of working with the resource is similar to that of *Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition* described in Section 4 in that brief initial appreciation tasks precede practical learning, rehearsing and refining activities in which students apply what they have observed and learned into their own practice of the dance. It is recommended that this process of application should allow students to incorporate each concept or principle studied in the performance on the DVD-ROM within their own interpretation, thus embedding personal characteristics into performance of the piece as choreographed. In addition, the practice to improve performance will constantly be informed through analysis and evaluation of their own performances with reference to, rather than a copying of, the dancer's performance on the DVD-ROM. Indeed, throughout the processes of learning and improving the performance of *Vocalise*, it is advised that recording and playback of students' own dancing should take place for evaluation and assessment purposes. It is also suggested that each student might like to create a video diary of his or her progress in developing a skilful, accurate, artistic and expressive performance of the dance piece.

Resource-based teaching/learning – practical assignments using the DVD

The following example tasks in appreciation and performance are based on similar approaches in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* DVD-ROM resource pack. However, because the reader has no access to the technology aids provided on the DVD-ROM which allow detailed viewing of, for example, individual phrases with optional views or the music score synchronised with the video, the study of performance through use of the solo, *Vocalise*, is limited to the demonstration of appreciation and analysis tasks only. In other words, students will not be able to learn and perform *Vocalise*. Rather, teachers should select another solo⁸ for students to learn and work on to improve performance so that the methods of deconstruction, reconstruction, rehearsal and refinement are immediately applied.

⁸ Possibly a set solo for an examination or assessment.

Before learning any dance, tasks should be set to develop initial appreciation. The students should have information on the name of the choreographer, the date the piece was created, the composer and title of the music and date it was composed.

After or during several viewings of the dance students should be led to:⁹

- consider the genre, historical context, traditions evident, style of dance in relation to the choreographer's background (if available)
- if it is available for study, consider the choreographer's intention
- discern and discuss the theme providing evidence for the interpretation by making reference to movement ideas presented in the dance
- comment on the overall quality of the dance (eg, athletic, dramatic, fast and intricate, lyrical, rhythmic)
- discuss the genre, historical context, traditions evident, style of the music/sound (if any) and its overall quality
- comment on the relationship between the accompaniment and the dance piece
- define criteria to assess the performer and then apply them to make comments on the quality of the dancer's performance

Having appreciated overall features of the dance, students could begin to learn the dance in the following way.

Activity 1: identifying, extracting and practising key movement skills

Analysis and appreciation

View *Vocalise*, the solo in the practical assignments section of the DVD, as many times as required.

- While viewing, work individually or with a partner to identify and list movements performed more than once.
- Categorise and name the key movements listed.

⁹ The tasks that follow are the same as in Template 1 in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* Resource Book, p. 14.

Teaching points

Students should be encouraged to use basic language such as jump, fall etc and technical terms such as contraction, side lunge and arabesque where appropriate.

- Identify movements that derive from known techniques.

Teaching points

Students might recognise Graham-based, Cunningham-based and ballet-based skills and should name the movements that may derive from such techniques.

Key movements in *Vocalise* include the contraction, balances in 4th and on one foot, leg circles, side lunges and spring into various moves. Obviously, to be able to perform this dance well, students need to develop these skills separately and as they are performed in the dance. Hence, technical exercises that break down then build up the skills effectively need to be created.

- Select one of the key skills that students would need to practise if they were to learn and perform *Vocalise* and discuss ways of breaking it down so that progressive exercises build from simple beginnings to the level of complexity required. For example, for the first leg circle in phrase 1, perform circular actions outwards into steps back on alternate feet aiming to keep hips still and the working foot in contact with the floor. Then repeat but allow the working foot to leave the floor from the side to the back adding an element of swing into the leg prior to the step back. Finally, repeat adding a half turn on the supporting foot into three steps back. This would be sufficient practice for the first time this leg action is used in *Vocalise*. However, later the action will need further development which would require at least another three progressive technical practices to accomplish the skill of high leg circle with opening of arms taken into a hop and turn. (Find and bookmark this moment in *Vocalise* – Part 3 of the accompanying DVD.)

Improving performance

So that students learn your *own* selected solo, undertake the following:¹⁰

After or during several viewings of the dance:

1. Identify the key movements and create a table to note the incidences of each key movement.
2. Note the key movements that can be applied to a known technique. If resources are available, have them ready to make reference to visual presentations of exercises or movements to help students see what is to be aimed at in a good performance of the defined skills.
3. Design suitable exercises resulting from a breakdown of the essential techniques in all the key movements. Then design further exercises to build from the basics towards ways in which each key movement appears in the set dance.
4. Design methods to enable students to practise the key movements either alone or in pairs. For example, worksheet questions relating to teaching/coaching points could be presented to each student so that they have aspects of each movement to work on.
5. Design criteria to evaluate each student's performance of the key movements as they appear in the set dance to be learned.

Teaching points

It is not recommended to undertake all the technical practices required for the dance at one time. Rather, teachers might select those that are needed for the first four phrases, let us say, so that the students can begin to learn the dance even in Session 1. The other key skills practices could take place in subsequent lessons as they are needed for learning the dance.

¹⁰ The tasks that follow are the same as in Template 2 in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* Resource Book, p. 16.

Activity 2: linking key movement skills into phrases and sections

Analysis and appreciation

View *Vocalise*, the solo in the practical assignments section of the DVD as many times as required.

- View phrase 1 (up to the balance in 4th and pause), several times. Identify all the movements in phrase 1 and comment on whether they are key or transition movements and whether they are linked creating continuity or emphasised through pause.
- Now do the same for phrase 2 (up to the side lunge).
- In the absence of a phrase menu bar attempt to discern a further three separate phrases in *Vocalise* (for example, phrase 5 described below, the following floor work phrase, the phrase that ends the dance phrase 15 also described below) to undertake the task in the first bullet above.

Phrase 5

Turn, reach, run into skip, run into spring into contraction, step hop turn, step hop turn, run into balance 4th position.

Phrase 15

Balance on one foot into contraction, run into turn, step through balance in 4th position, step through balance in 4th position, step slide into turn x 2, step into contraction, close and reach, step and close, twist, reach, lower and stand.

Improving performance

Now, so that students learn your *own* selected solo, undertake the following:¹¹

Unless the teacher wishes to pre-define these components, each activity could start with students working individually or in pairs but it should conclude with an agreed analysis of the phrases and sections in the dance and the accompanying music.

¹¹ The tasks that follow are the same as in Template 3 in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* Resource Book, p. 25

- Analysis of the dance to identify the action content in the phrases and sections in relation to the music:
 1. Bearing in mind that a phrase in dance can be likened to a sentence in literature including punctuation within it, view the dance several times to agree on the number of phrases identifying the start and finish of each phrase.
 2. Consider how these phrases relate to perceived phrases in the music and create a phrase chart including reference to bars (measures) and beats.
 3. Consider a section to be more like a paragraph in literature – groups of linked sentences (phrases) and divide the dance into sections.
 4. Write a section chart.

Students should have access to all the above materials either in their own workbooks or in large presentation on a wall or both.

Learning the dance phrases, sections and the whole dance.

5. Define ways of learning the phrases. This learning may include identification of key movements and their role within each phrase.
6. Create tasks to help students link the phrases into sections and ultimately the whole dance. The tasks could include reference to emphases on some movements, moments of stillness (describing the type – held or living and ongoing), smoothness and continuity or separation between movements. At this point in learning the dance, students should think about these elements as punctuation.
7. Define criteria that can be used to determine good performance of phrases and sections.
8. Design methods to enable students to practise the phrases and sections either alone or in pairs. For example, worksheet questions relating to teaching points could be presented to each student so that they have aspects of each section to work on.
9. Create tasks to evaluate and improve each student's performance of the phrases and sections in the set dance to be learned. Wherever possible this should include video capture of each student's performance to allow for self-assessment and means of determining how performance can be improved.

Teaching points

Again, this work should occur as learning the dance progresses rather than all at once. It is important that students develop a feel for phrasing in the dance in relation to the music (if any). The preliminary deconstruction and appreciation of the dance develops their understanding of the contained expression so that their performance can ultimately show qualities that differentiate parts within the whole by means of punctuation – continuity, pauses and emphases. This work should produce a very different performance compared with that which gives the same value to all the ‘steps’.

Activity 3: focusing on time, dynamics and changes of speed and force in relation to the music

Analysis and appreciation

View *Vocalise*, the solo in the practical assignments section of the DVD, and undertake the following tasks.

- Study the beat and bar structure of phrases 1 and 2 (ending in the high 4th position and side lunge respectively) with reference to the representation below. (*Vocalise* is difficult to deconstruct in this way since the music is very asymmetric. However, most dances and accompanying music can be deconstructed fairly easily, especially if the music score is available.)

Phrase 1: 6 beat phrase

Bar 1 4/4				Bar 2 2/4		Bar 3 4/4	
	2	3	4	1	2	1	

Phrase 2: 9 beat phrase

Bar 3 cont.			Bar 4 4/4			Bar 5 4/4		
2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2

- Now study these phrases again, with reference to the key below, to discern pauses, commas and accents.

Time qualities key (Qualities of continuity, pause, comma, light and strong accents)

_____ continuous line = continuous smooth movement

_____ gap in line = pause

Λ upside down V = strong accent

V right side up V = light accent

/ slash = comma or semi-colon (mid and/or end of phrase)

Phrase 1: 6 beat phrase

Bar 1 4/4

Bar 2 2/4

Bar 3 4/4

	2	3	4	1	2	1
--	---	---	---	---	---	---

Phrase 2: 9 beat phrase

Bar 3 cont.

Bar 4 4/4

Bar 5 4/4

2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2
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Speed

- Consider the dance as a whole and identify changes of speed. Apply terms such as quick or fast, slow, sustained, accelerate, decelerate.
- Notice the relationship of these speed changes in movement to the incidences of changes in the music (*ritenuto* and back to *a tempo*).

Force

- Working in pairs, sit facing each other. Play the whole dance and whilst listening to the cello in the music, one partner should open the arms on *crescendo* or *forte* (stronger) moments and close them on *diminuendo* or *piano* (softer) moments. The other partner should do the same thing whilst listening to the piano.
- The pair should do this again with a third person noting at least two movement snippets in the dance that reflect the *stronger* moments from the 'cello and a fourth person doing the same in relation to the piano.
- Repeat the above but this time the third and fourth person should note at least two softer or quieter snippets in the dance that reflect the 'cello or piano.
- Discuss these changes in force in relation to the expression in the dance and music.

Teaching points and evaluation criteria

Speed

- Students should note that there are instances of all the terms listed in the first bullet point referring to speed and note the subtle nuances that demonstrate the differences between them. The fast moves are not very fast at all but are merely relative to the slow, for example, and the acceleration and deceleration occur with short ranges of changes from slow to quick or vice versa.
- Students could use conventional music vocabulary (*adagio* for slow; *andante* – flowing walking pace; *allegro* – fast; *presto* – very fast; with the addition of Italian words to qualify the terms such as *molto* – much or more; *poco* – a little or less) or make up words to define changes of speed.
- Understanding of the word *ritenuto* should be developed. Some suggest it is merely playing more slowly, others that it is holding back. Students might discuss the difference here and comment on which translation is the most appropriate in this instance.

Force

- Students may show a small range of out and in moves of the arms to denote the short *crescendo* and *diminuendo* moments played by each instrument. After these exercises students should appreciate the relevance of signs on a music score such as *p* for *piano* or soft; *f* for *forte* or loud/strong and the practice of using two or three of these letters together to denote degrees of softness or loudness – eg. *fff*.

Improving performance

For students to focus on phrasing whilst learning your *own* selected solo, undertake the following:¹²

- Analysis of bars, beats, phrases and sections – extending and deepening the work done in Activity 2:
 1. Assuming that the dance to be performed is accompanied by music, the first task to be undertaken by the teacher and/or the students is to ascertain the time signature of the music, the number of bars (or meters) and beats in each bar. If the music score and/or a notation score are available this task is much simpler.
 2. The next task is to match the dance movements with the bars and beats of the music. It is suggested that bars are represented in boxes as presented above.
 3. Following this, dance phrases and sections should be defined. (This may have already been done in work undertaken for Activity 2.)
- Analysis of the time and force dynamics/qualities in the dance and music.

¹² The tasks that follow are similar to those in Template 5 in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* Resource Book, p. 34.

4. At the outset the teacher/students should agree on the dominant overall qualities in the dance and music. Clearly, *Vocalise* is lyrical, mostly continuous and slow. Once these overall qualities are agreed upon, a set of symbols to denote them should be created and then applied to the drawings of bars and beats. The headings to use here could include continuity – including punctuation such as pauses or stillness; commas, and accents; speed – including all variations; and force – including all degrees.
- Improving performance of the dance focusing on time and force qualities.
5. Create tasks that help students to focus on each of the above qualities in practice of phrases, sections and dynamics/qualities of time and force. Once each aspect is performed with clarity and differentiation in the qualities, students should, of course, aim at combining the focuses so that sensitivity to all the qualities in relation to the music is demonstrated in performance.
6. Using as much technology as is available (for example, digital video cameras and playback systems) tasks should be created to encourage students to evaluate their own and others' performances and to develop strategies for improving them.

Throughout the above, students should have access to all the materials created, for example, charts/drawings, music and/or notation score, the music recording and video of both the demonstration dancer(s) and themselves for analysis/practice purposes.

Activity 4: analysis of the dance phrases in relation to the use of space – floor pathways, directions, alignment, focus and shape of the body in space

Analysis and appreciation

View *Vocalise*, the solo in the practical assignments section of the DVD and undertake the following tasks.

The aim of this analysis is to develop students' knowledge and understanding of orientations in space both in the room and around the dancer – floor pathways,¹³ directions of facing and moving in the performance. The analysis will also identify the alignment, focus and shape of the body of the dancer especially in the moments of arrival or pause. Such awareness of the moving body in *space* should improve performance.

Floor pathways

View *Vocalise* on the DVD and on previously prepared eight squared grids on paper (as taped on the floor) draw the dancer's floor pathways.

Directions of facing and moving

Watch the first three phrases in *Vocalise* (finishing on the balance on the left foot into contraction in the right front corner) and follow the analysis presented below.

Phrase	Direction(s) of facing	Direction/s of moving
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Phrase ending in 4th high	Left back corner Right corner	Backward Turn right Backward Forward Up
Phrase 2 ending in side lunge	Left front corner	Sideways to right Turn right Sideways to left
Phrase 3 ending in balance RFC	Left back corner Right back corner	Forward Turn right Foreward

¹³ Air pathways are not dominant in this dance so there is no special focus on them.

Alignment, focus and body shape

- Consider and discuss definitions. Alignment is defined here as the positioning and relationship of the parts of the body as it moves through space. During movement imaginary lines, curves or body shapes are created which are appreciated by an audience like many still pictures that create images in space; line and shape created in the body and even beyond it, provide aesthetic pleasure for those viewing the dance. In dance, line is frequently enhanced by use of focus which complements or extends beyond the line or shape created.
- View the following examples of these performance qualities in *Vocalise*:
 - Phrase 1 – achieving a good curved body shape on the contraction – head in line with arms.
 - Phrase 2 (the first stretch high after the glissade) – demonstrating a continuous line from the top arm through the shoulders while bending to the left and head following the line while looking down.
 - Phrase 2 (the ending side lunge) – flat sideways orientation of the body facing LFC with the shoulders linking the curved high (right arm) and curved low (left arm) lines of the arms complemented by the curve sideways of the body showing a curve from left knee to left shoulder.
 - Phrase 3 – extension in the arabesque – leg high and straight, back upright and open, shoulders down and head focusing forwards.
- View the whole dance and select other instances of movements or stillness that require attention given to alignment, focus and/or body shape.

Improving performance

To develop students' abilities to analyse the use of space – floor pathways, air pathways, directions, alignment, focus and shape of the body – and to improve these aspects in performance in your *own* selected solo, undertake the following tasks:¹⁴

1. Tape a grid to the floor (the size and number of squares should be determined by the floor coverage of the dance). Set students the task of

¹⁴ The tasks that follow are similar to those in Template 6 in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* Resource Book, p. 37.

- producing *floor pathways* on paper to represent the lines of travel for each phrase of the dance.
2. Determine *air pathways* in movements that emphasise this feature and devise tasks to guide their practice of both floor and air pathways.
 3. Complete a 3 column chart to determine *directions of facing* and *directions of moving* in each *phrase* of the dance and design tasks to help students achieve accuracy in these aspects of their performance.
 4. Clarify the meanings of the terms *alignment*, *focus* and *body shape* and set tasks to help students study and improve performance of these elements in the dance.
 5. Using as much technology as is available (for example, digital video cameras and playback systems) tasks should be created to encourage students to evaluate their own and others' use of *space* and to develop strategies for improving the above aspects.

Activity 5: Analysis of the form of the dance – motifs, repetitions, developments, variations, contrasts, climaxes and unity of parts and the whole

Analysis and appreciation

The aim of this analysis and deconstruction is to develop students' knowledge and understanding of the form of the dance, ie, the relationship of its parts to the whole. It is considered important that students reconstruct and perform dances demonstrating this knowledge and understanding so that the continuity, development and resolutions of its parts relate to the expressive whole. Even if there is no dramatic underlying idea, every dance, as in the case for music, has a story-line, a progressive unfolding of themes and sub-themes. In the case of *Vocalise*, in line with the accompanying music, the movement content itself constitutes the themes and sub-themes, and it is the progression and interplay of the movements or motifs in terms of how they are repeated, developed and varied and how they are *contrasted* with new motifs, repetitions and developments that contribute to climaxes/resolutions and the unified whole. It is contended here that such awareness of form in performance will present an audience with the story-line so that they too will appreciate and understand the relationship of all its parts to the whole.

Dance composition

View *Vocalise* on the DVD and undertake the following tasks.

- Analysis of form through identification of the above elements in selected sections of the dance.
 - Study section 1 of the dance in the table below picking out the motifs, repetitions and developments.

Section I Phrases 1–3 Motifs, repetitions, developments

1	Stand, triplet, leg circle, turn, steps into contraction, steps into balance in 4th position
2	Lower into side stretch, spring, step across, side stretch, slide, turn, balance in 4th position, into side lunge
3	Turn, run, step, balance on one foot, turn, step, balance on one foot, tip, run, step, balance on one foot

- Discuss with a partner:
 - a. How you might define motifs? Are they single moves or a sequence of moves?
 - b. The moments that you perceive repetition – again, are they in single moves or in the sequences?
 - c. Where development occurs.

Teaching points:

- If they have already studied the key movements in Activity 1, students will probably determine motifs as single moves. However, in phrase 1, for example, they may well consider that the triplet into contraction constitutes one motif and the step into balance in 4th another motif.
- Students should recognise repetitions of single moves which are quite obvious – 4th positions, contractions and balances on one foot but are

these all just repetitions or does development feature within a repetition?

- At the end of this exercise students may come to the conclusion that even if you define motifs as short sequences rather than single moves, the latter can be repeated and/or developed when they occur within the sequences. Hence they appear as key movements – motifs within motifs.

- View *Vocalise* and pick out repetitions and developments of movements that occur in phrase 1.
- View *Vocalise* and pick out repetitions and developments of movements that occur in phrase 2.
- View *Vocalise* and note the contrasting motif on the floor the first time then compare this to the same moves the second time to discern repetitions and developments.
- Discuss the ways in which the form of the dance and the music complement each other in terms of the repetitions, developments, contrasts, climaxes/resolutions and the overall unity.

Teaching points and evaluation criteria

- Students should focus attention on the form elements and discuss the ways in which this improves the performance of the dance and how the audience receives it, ie, the ‘journeys’ made by the motifs to create unity.
- Students should re-consider the qualities in each phrase as studied in Activity 3 so that the accents, pauses, commas and continuities characterise the repetitions, developments, contrasts etc. to produce a dynamic ‘storyline’.

Improving performance

Identification of the elements of form in your own selected solo and demonstration of an understanding of them in performance.¹⁵

1. Use the phrase and sections analysis undertaken in Activity 2 and create

¹⁵ The tasks that follow are similar to those in Template 7 in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* Resource Book, p. 41.

tasks to help students identify motifs, repetitions, developments, contrasts, and climaxes as the dance progresses.

2. Create tasks for pairs or small groups so that students practise and evaluate their performances of the sections of the dance concentrating on these elements of form.
3. Define ways in which the form of the music and the form of the dance can be studied to determine the relationships between them.
4. Design methods to enable students in performance and evaluation of performance to focus on both the qualitative features of the movement content and the aspects of form in 1. above.

Activity 6: analysis of the style and expression in the dance and development of practices to improve these aspects in individual interpretation of the dance

Analysis and appreciation

The aim of this final activity is to focus on the style and expression in a dance so the students' performances distinguish dances as entities that communicate stylistic and expressive characteristics that are different compared with other dances in the same genre. Ultimately, focus on its distinctive style and expression along with all the previous study should lead to performances that go beyond technical mastery towards artistry and aesthetic engagement of both performer and audience.

A good performance, however, depends on how far the dancer has made the dance his or her own. Individual interpretation of the piece is an important aim and work towards integration of the style and expression intrinsic to the choreography with the style and expression of the performer, makes for an individually coloured performance. Understanding and knowledge shown through performance is frequently termed as 'getting inside' the piece but the performance must also reflect the distinctive ways in which the performing artist interprets the dance. Clearly, a balance is needed between accuracy of presentation of the choreography, as 'written', and the individual interpretation of the dancer. The activities below

aim to assist this process. Read pages 81–86 on definitions of style in *Methods of construction 6*.

View *Vocalise* on the DVD and undertake the following tasks.

- Taking account of the work undertaken before Activity 1, write down ways in which the style of *Vocalise* can be defined as:
 - a. modern or contemporary dance
 - b. traditional modern or contemporary dance
 - c. in part – classical
 - d. based on known techniques (Graham, Cunningham, etc.)
 - e. similar in style to other choreographers' dance works

Teaching points

- Under a., students should be encouraged to list all or most of the following features that differentiate modern/contemporary dance from other styles:
 - Feet in parallel and all parts of the feet used sensitively in relation to the floor
 - Torso/centre of the body important in all movements
 - Weight shifts into and out of balances
 - Contractions with downwards/inwards focus and releases with upwards/ outwards focus
 - Tipping/falling into and out of balances to achieve an on-going feel
 - Hips initiating moves or extending beyond the centre line
 - Floor work – moves into, across and out of the floor
 - Natural opposition of arms and legs as in walking
 - Emphasis on rhythmic qualities of impulse, impact and swing
 - Variety in length of phrases and in rhythmic patterning
- Under b. students should be able to distinguish the style as traditional in the sense that it is clearly not related to more recent contemporary dance styles such as release technique, nor derived out of street/hip hop, martial arts influences etc. etc.
- Point c. could result in a list of movements that are ballet-based – arabesque, *rond de jambe*, for example.

- Point d. clearly requires that students have some knowledge of the base techniques. There are movements that could be labelled both Graham and Cunningham based.
 - Point e. depends entirely on the students' knowledge of choreographers' works but their own opinions should be sought here providing justifications are given.
- Now consider the expression contained in *Vocalise* and list as many words as you can recall to describe the qualities in the dance (eg, soft, gentle, quiet, calm, smooth), and write a paragraph to indicate how these qualities contribute to the expression in the dance.
 - Write another paragraph to suggest how the music contributes to this expression.
 - Work with a partner to combine ideas and to refine the two paragraphs. Read them to the class and then vote to select the best two paragraphs.

Improving performance

Tasks to identify style and expression in your own selected solo and to develop practices to improve these aspects in individual interpretation of the dance.¹⁶

1. Identify the genre and style of the dance within a cultural and historical context of choreography in general and create tasks to help students to note the relationship of the style of the dance to previous or current practices and make acknowledgement of eclecticism if this is evident.
2. Create tasks to discern how the style is created through the choreographer's choice of key movements, the range of qualities in time and space, the phrasing, sectioning and the form of the dance (topics of the previous activities).
3. Develop strategies to improve students' performance of the dance so that the style of the piece is integrated with each student's own style.
4. Design tasks to develop appreciation and expose a full range of qualitative language that can be used to describe the expression embedded in the dance.

¹⁶ The tasks that follow are similar to those in Template 8 in the *Vocalise – improving dance performance* Resource Book, p. 45..

5. Define ways in which students can practice to enhance their expression in performing the dance with its music accompaniment (if applicable).
6. Work with students to write criteria of evaluation of their videoed performances with reference to *style* and *expression* and each student's individual interpretation of the dance.

All of the above activities have focused on solo dance performance. Obviously, there are many more aspects that need to be considered in duo or group dance performances. Orchestration of the dancers in time and space (*Methods of construction* 3) constitutes a whole range of study. To inform their own duo rehearsals, students might benefit from analysis and appreciation of the dancers' performance of the Duo in Part 2 of the DVD. Here, they can see good examples of unison, canon, complementary action, positioning and spatial patterning in relation to each other as well as use of contact. Concentration on these specific aspects as well as to all the features above used in solo performance should enhance duo and group performance.

This section has considered ways in which study of performance can be undertaken by using technology to develop analysis and appreciation skills through deconstruction of filmed performances and, by means of this study and practical application, achieving excellence in performance of the students' own dances.

The processes involved point to changes in current practice where, for the most part, technique is taught first to provide students with physical skills to be able to dance any dance, towards increasing knowledge and understanding of the dance to be performed *whilst* developing the skills to perform them. Through analysis, deconstruction and appreciation of the dance to be learned juxtaposed with reconstruction and informed rehearsal of it focusing on the aspects incorporated in Activities 1–6 above, all attributes of a good performance will develop and the criteria specified, on page 180 will have been covered.

The essential point here is that to 'get inside' a performance and to interpret the dance in an individual way, students need to become fully aware of its composition. It is often said that a dance is only as good as its performance. Indeed, it is very difficult to discern a good dance from a poor performance. It is therefore very important that, whether the dance is to be judged on its composition or its performance, the performance is as qualitative and enriched

as possible so that the audience becomes fully engaged and aesthetically moved by the dance and the dancer(s). Clearly, technology can play an enormous role on the journey towards achieving this end.

Section 6

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Standing back from the process – evaluations

The composer's freedom

The process of composing a dance varies with each person who attempts it, and no one can set out rules or methods of progression which can be followed to achieve guaranteed success.

When the composer is at work there is constant influence exerted from the inter-relationship of his/her:

1. imagination and intuition
2. knowledge of movement material
3. knowledge of methods of construction
4. acquaintance knowledge of form, style and meaning in the aesthetic realm which has been gained through experience of seeing other people's dances and art works in forms other than dance.

So far, this book has been concerned mainly with the areas 2 and 3 above and to some extent 4 has been discussed in Sections 3, 4 and 5. To consider the inter-relationship further it becomes necessary to attempt more detailed discussion of 1 and 4.

Imagination and intuition

The fact that the composer's imagination and intuition are active during the creation of a dance cannot be disputed. Section 3 attempted to deconstruct one student's creative process to illustrate how the input of intuition and imagination featured. However, these are elusive qualities and to discuss when they function, and even what they are, is very difficult indeed. The following ideas on some

possible roles that imagination and intuition might play in the composition of a dance, are based upon the experience of making dances and discussion with many students both during and after the process of composing.

Clearly the dance composer cannot function without using imagination. One of the definitions offered in Webster's Dictionary (1966) is:

... the ability or gift of forming conscious ideas or mental images especially for the purpose of artistic or intellectual creation.

A composer has complete freedom of imagination until he/she has decided on the idea for a dance. Sometimes, this can be a difficult decision if the imagination is fired by many alternative ideas. In choosing a theme, the inexperienced composer is often unaware of the pitfalls when he/she tries – unsuccessfully – to translate great epics or very involved and intricate plots into dance form. He/she imagines these complex dances, and attempt to interpret them without any real knowledge or awareness of the technical problems which need to be resolved. A skilled dance composer has acquired this knowledge, and understands that it is an integral part of the craft. Through the experience of trial and error, a creative person endeavouring to compose dances gradually learns that knowledge of the limitations of the art form disciplines imagination to that which is possible.

Imagination in relation to the stimulus

Material content

On hearing a lively piece of music the composer, spontaneously or through meditation, consciously recalls movements which pertain to the quality of liveliness. This response may occur simultaneously with movement if the composer improvises immediately with the music, or it may occur solely in the mind of the composer while listening to the music.

The composer's initial reaction to the stimulus thus evokes certain conscious ideas or mental images but these do not come from out of the blue, for as Redfern (1973) states:

To be imaginative in the aesthetic realm demands knowledge and understanding of the standards and techniques peculiar to the art form in question. (p. 20)

The conscious recall of suitable movements for communication of liveliness occurs within the imagination of the composer. He/she imagines a dancer or dancers performing known movements (knowledge) and which are within the range of acceptable vocabulary to depict the mood (understanding of the standards).

The dance form

During or after this initial response to the music, and as a result of it, the composer may imagine a *dance outcome*. The outcome, whether an entire framework or only a small part, continues to guide the composer's movement response to the stimulus. The outcome might, for example, be seen to grow to a height in the middle when the lively dance would contain extravagant jumps, turns, rolls and leaps. It might also be imagined to have a final leap which exits from the stage. The composer, with this in mind, then begins to manipulate material to fit these conscious images, and thus starts composing.

Imagination during composition

Material content

The composer continues to search for movements from his/her repertoire which are deemed suitable, and tries to make them as original (imaginative) as possible. Perhaps this is achieved by altering the more commonly employed movement characteristics, such as, size, level, direction, part of body used, qualitative content and gesture. It is understandable that the composer should want to aim for originality. It is also understandable that he/she should wish to move away from conventional movement towards a form which is unique and his/her own. But the movements:

. . . can hardly be counted as original or imaginative if they occur without reference to existing practices, and without the understanding and deliberate intent which make a 'differing form' possible.

Redfern (1973), p. 15

This reinforces the comment made previously, that, however original, to be successful the vocabulary must be recognisable. It can be open to many interpretations but these should be within a certain realm of ideas. We all look for imaginative or original movement material and evaluate dances with this as a criterion. The composer should set out with this aim. It may be that the dance demands to be stated simply, but the simplest movement content can be presented imaginatively by means of sensitive juxtaposition or original and inspired use of repetition.

The dance form

As soon as the first motif is composed, the imagined dance outcome becomes clearer in form. The composer begins to think of possible directions that it may take. For example, he/she may imagine:

- an immediate repetition of the motif developed and varied, followed by an introduction of a new and contrasting motif, or
- an introduction of another he/she, as contrast to the first, followed by an interplay of the two.

According to experience, the composer, consciously or intuitively, employs the elements of form – repetition, variation, contrast, climax, proportion, balance, transition, logical development and unity. He/she may imagine some of these elements within the dance form before actually manipulating the material. He/she may, for example, consciously imagine the climax movements and work up to these through logical sequencing of the material content and placing of the dancers within the stage space. This belies a mainstream approach, of course. Alternative approaches (see Section 2: *Methods of construction* 8) require just as much imaginative thought in the choreographic process.

It would seem, therefore, that the images construed within the composer's thought pose compositional problems (which may be shared with the dancers) and that these require further thought to solve them. This latter imaginative or original thought might produce even richer form than that imagined in the initial stages (especially if dancers also contribute explorations and discoveries of responses to the problems set). The saying goes, 'Let your imagination run away with you'. Often this occurs, and the composer may be surprised with the results

in composition. This element of surprise is as pertinent during the process of composition as it is in the viewing of it as a completed form:

A work of art always surprises us: it has worked its effect before we have become conscious of its presence.

Read (1931), p. 69

During composition, the composer's imagination is structured by the stimulus, by knowledge of movement material and, above all, by the technique peculiar to dance construction. But within this framework there is freedom and the range and quality of the imagination used has a great deal to do with the ultimate success of the dance.

Intuition

In building up his composition, the artist may proceed intellectually or instinctively, or perhaps more often partly by one method and partly by the other. But most of the great artists of the Renaissance – Piero della Francesca, Leonardo, Raphael – had a definite bias towards an intellectual construction, often based, like Greek sculpture or architecture, on a definite mathematical ratio. But when we come to Baroque composition like El Greco's 'Conversion of St. Maurice' the scheme is so intricate, so amazing in its repeated relations, so masterly in the reinforcement which gives form to intention, that the form itself, as often the solution of some mathematical problem, must have been an intuition.

Read (1931), p. 62

Although Read suggests that some great artists proceed either intellectually or instinctively, it is accepted by many that, in dance, the composer must allow intuition to guide them. At the same time they always need to intellectualise because, during the process of composition, it is important continually to evaluate, select and memorise the movement content. The question is whether intuition is the main method of procedure, and how it is supported by knowledge which,

for the dance composer, includes knowledge of movement and material and methods of constructing dance form. Section 3 introduced this idea of objective/subjective interplay through discussion of one student's creative process. However, a further consideration is pertinent here.

Intuition without knowledge

The composer who relies mostly on intuition may produce something that is good and instinctively recognise it as such:

It is recognised that the inspiration and conception of a work of art may often derive from the unconscious levels of the artist's personality and may not lie wholly open to deliberate, conscious apprehension. Hence the created work may embody fuller wealth of import than the artist himself is aware of. Indeed it is sometimes maintained that the artist himself is not the best interpreter or exponent of his work. Osborne (1968), p.188

If the art work derives from the subconscious, without the support of knowledge, the form that emerges through intuition may only be successful once or even twice. Here the artist has hit upon something accidentally but, without knowledge of form, cannot begin to estimate why it is good and so never progresses beyond trial and error methods. In this situation, the composer experiences great frustration if he/she cannot be successful again and does not know why.

Knowledge overruling intuition

The composer who treats composition as an academic exercise often produces work which lacks feeling and warmth of human expression. The form may be sound theoretically but too predictable, and the content might lack the excitement that often derives from intuitive artistic flair.

Intuition with knowledge

The middle line, of course, is the best route. The composer's natural feeling or artistry needs to be disciplined by knowledge and techniques peculiar to the art form. For example, knowledge of principles of form guides the composer's intuitive inspiration whilst he/she is shaping the dance:

These structural motives are very important in the making of a picture or any other plastic work of art, though they are not necessarily a deliberate choice of the artist. Read (1931), p.69

The more one works with principles the more they become a part of one's technique. The dance composer who has consciously manipulated the principles of form for long enough, will find that they become part of his/her subconscious. To some extent, the methods of constructing a dance will instinctively incorporate consideration of the elements of form. This is what Read may be implying when he says, 'they are not necessarily a deliberate choice of the artist'. The artist's intuition is disciplined by the sub-conscious knowledge of form. But the intuition should be let loose because the unique personal qualities which each work of art must possess can only emerge through the personal contribution of the artist and his/her intuitive feeling for art.

Intuition and acquaintance knowledge

The composer who engages in use of resources as discussed in Section 3 and exemplified in Section 4, will inevitably learn from them. If he/she has frequent opportunity to see dance in the theatre or study it as repertoire, he/she may gradually become perceptive of form, style and meaning and subconsciously absorb a feeling for these elements which can be transposed into his/her own works. This learning can be acquired gradually through experience, but it is accelerated greatly if the composer has knowledge of form, style and meaning per se. The student-composer who is in the process of learning about composition will be able to appraise critically what is seen within a clear frame of reference. The student without such knowledge appraises through feeling alone.

Experience of watching varied dance works and encountering works of other art forms is perhaps a means of developing intuitive awareness and, even though it might not be a conscious awareness, the composer is bound to acquire an acquaintance knowledge of form which enhances his/her potential in dance composition.

Theoretical knowledge, supported by acquaintance knowledge of form, disciplines and guides the composer's intuition, but feeling must be allowed to penetrate and have an effect upon the work.

Knowing and feeling

At best, the composer is knowledgeable in terms of material for dance and methods of constructing a dance. He/she will also have seen many dances and have what is deemed to be a good imagination and a feeling for dance as art.

Knowledge of principles of composition and acquaintance knowledge of form, style and meaning in dance may be kept at a voluntary conscious level, or it might be so ingrained that it functions at the involuntary sub-conscious level. Imagination and intuition, inextricably interwoven with, and guided by, knowledge provide the bounds of the composer's freedom.

The inspirational moments always require intellectual evaluation and analysis so that they may properly fit into the form of the dance, but the rarity of the moments themselves is inexplicable. The composer is constantly moving from feeling to knowing or the other way round. Somehow feeling and knowing merge on an indefinable plane. Discussion on this aspect of the compositional process can only go so far. However much is said, it remains just the tip of the iceberg.

The important point here is that, whilst recognising the essential roles of imagination and intuition, it must also be clear that there exists a body of knowledge sufficient to guide and structure the movement outcomes of feeling and imagining into order and form.

The chart opposite may be taken to represent a summary of the discussion presented so far.

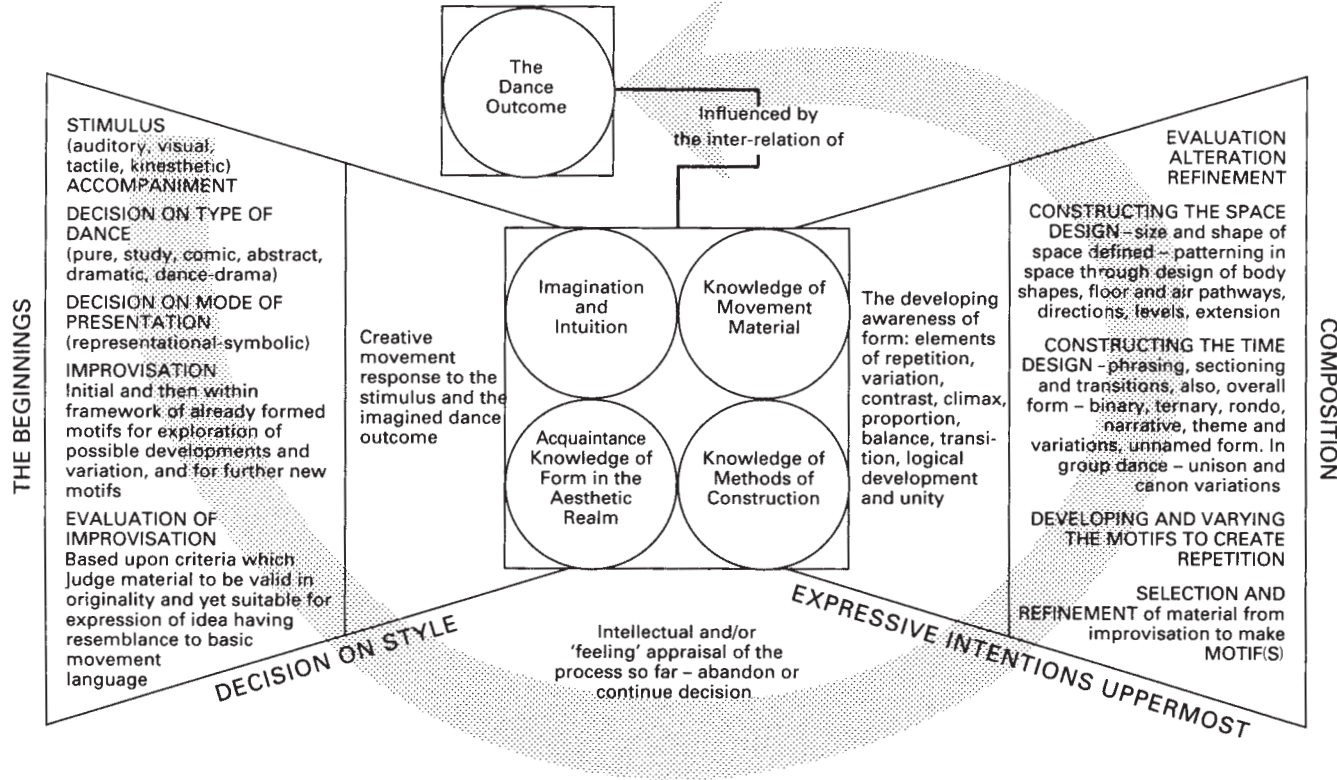
There is no distinct order of events during the process of composition. The curved arrow indicates a general direction, though there is bound to be a return to a particular stage at any time. For example, up until the last movement is selected the composer constantly needs to improvise and explore a range of possibilities.

Evaluations

Response to a work of art is always based on experience which may grow to become discerning and mature. A dance can only be measured as successful in a relative sense. Relative to the onlooker's experience and background and the composer's stage of development in composing.

There is no objective formula for evaluation of a dance. It cannot be entirely processed by factual analysis, yet it is not merely judged on inner feelings or personal taste. Inevitably the onlooker will reflect intellectually about what is seen and, in viewing art, this is always influenced by aesthetic judgments:

THE PROCESS OF COMPOSITION IN DANCE



The word aesthetic comes from the Greek word, 'aesthesis' which means 'to perceive or to look at objects of interest'.

Curl (1973), p. 23

Looking at something to appreciate and describe it aesthetically implies that we use:

... concepts of shape, pattern, form, design; these then are the concepts appropriate to the aesthetic form of awareness, they connote perceptual characteristics.

Curl (1973), p. 23

Most of us can appreciate an art work aesthetically but probably lack the ability to describe it. That which is aesthetically pleasing will seem right, significant, complete, balanced and unified, and we may feel these qualities rather than know them. Of course, each onlooker will perceive something different, but aesthetic evaluation will have much to do with the form of the dance. Some viewers might see the intricate shaping and changes of the designs of the dancers in relation to each other as being the most aesthetically pleasing aspect of the dance. Others might appreciate the quality of the dancers' movements, and the patterns into which these have been designed. A few may be pleased by the overall shape of the dance, and see the beginning, middle and end in proportionate relationship, and each section as a well balanced entity yet carefully blended into a unified whole. Others may feel a sense of pleasure on recognition of the repetitions and contrasts and follow the design of the dance within these frames of reference.

It could be that the emotional intensity of the dance completely immersed the viewer so that, after the experience, he/she remembered little of its form, only that it felt right at the time. Here, the viewer has been aesthetically moved through expression rather than form. But one could say that the drama does not come across as significant unless embodied into a suitable shape, design or form.

It would appear, therefore, that aesthetic evaluation is to do with the onlooker's perception of the dance as a work of art having expressive meaning. This is always accompanied by an inner and immeasurable appreciation of form in art which has grown for the viewer by virtue of experience in the total world of art, through pictures, poems, plays, films, sculptures, music as well as dance.

Intellectual reflection requires factual analysis which can occur only if there is knowledge. The critic might judge more objectively from this standpoint though there are no set criteria by which one dance can be judged against another. Each dance uses material and is constructed in a different way from every other dance, and this makes comparison in judgement a very difficult task. Nevertheless, intellectual reflection upon the following lines might be possible.

Consider the whole dance as a work of art

1. Has the composer reached the objective? Did the dance seem significant and worth watching, or was it obscure and meaningless?
2. Did the dance have continuity? Did it sustain interest throughout or were there some weak parts?
3. Was every part of the dance essential to the whole?
4. Was the style of the dance clearly established and then maintained throughout?
5. Was there enough depth and variety in the material content or was it too simple, naïve and predictable?
6. Was the construction of the dance seen to have unity through its rhythmic structure?
7. Was there an element of surprise or was it all too easy to follow?
8. Was the choice of music – or other stimulus for accompaniment – suitable for the theme of the dance?
9. Was the dance constructed with an understanding of the stimulus?

After consideration of the dance as a whole art work, the student of dance composition might persist further in intellectual reflection. There is more to a dance than its pieces but these can be extracted and assessed. The following questions may help in this process.

1. Consider the dance idea

- a. Was the basic idea behind the dance conveyed, only partly conveyed, or not conveyed at all?
- b. Were the movement images translatable?
- c. Did the form help understanding of the underlying theme?

- d. Was the idea easily perceived or did the onlooker have to search intently to find meaning, and indeed, perhaps read into it that which was not meant to be?
- e. Was the topic too deep and involved for translation into dance movement?
- f. Simple ideas conveyed with artistry and originality often make the most successful dances. In pursuit of originality, however, has the composer chosen material which is too obscure in relation to the idea and, therefore, lost the simplicity by over-elaboration?
- g. Is it worth dancing about? Does it merit artistic expression? Does it have significance in the modern world?
- h. Does it cause emotional response and arouse the senses?
- i. Is the communication based on an individual distillation of expression or a hackneyed set of clichés?

2. Consider the movement content

- a. Did the composer choose appropriate movements in relation to the idea?
- b. Was there a width of movement content which created variety and interest?
- c. Was there balance of action, qualitative, space and relationship emphasis or too much concentration on any one?
- d. Were the movements easily discernable as symbolic or representative of meaningful communication?

Action

- e. Were the actions made interesting by varied co-ordinations and juxtaposition?
- f. Was the range of actions enough for the dance? (A range limited to nearly all gesture and positioning into body shape is a common fault.)

Qualities

- g. Was there enough qualitative or dynamic variation in the dance?
- h. Did the qualities colour the actions with appropriate light and shade enhancing the meaning?

Space

- i. Was the spatial aspect of the movement relevant to the idea?
- j. Did the composer use the stage space to best advantage and with consideration of locality and its expressive connotations?

- k. Was the dance an interesting visual experience creating lines and shapes in space in harmony with the idea?
- l. Was the use of focus a noticeable feature and did it communicate the intention?
- m. Were the movements extended in space enough for the audience to appreciate them?

Relationship

- n. Were there enough dancers or too many for the idea?
- o. Did the group relationship come over successfully?
- p. Was the unison achieved?
- q. Were the individuals placed advantageously in the group for the visual effect, or were some members masked by other dancers at any time?
- r. Did the design of the group in terms of complementing body shapes, levels, and complementing movement patterns, emerge as successful and meaningful in the dance?
- s. Did the solo stand out as important in the presence of the *ground bass*, or did it diminish by virtue of sheer strength of numbers in the preceding and following sections?
- t. Was the number of dancers absolutely necessary at all times, or were there moments when the duos could have been solos and the trios could have been duos, etc?

3. Consider the construction elements of form

- a. Motif: were the motifs apparent and foundational to the rest of the content of the dance?
- b. Repetition: was there enough repetition to establish the meanings in the chosen movements or was repetition overstressed?
- c. Variety and contrast: did the dance use variety and contrast in the best and most appropriate ways, or was contrast just put in for its own sake without due reference to the total meaning?
- d. Climax or highlights: how did the climaxes or highlights emerge? Were they apparent or forceful enough?
- e. Transition: did the transitions merge into and become part of the whole and were they effectively employed as links between parts?

- f. Proportion and balance: was the dance balanced in terms of content or did one section appear irrelevant? Was one section too long and the other too short? Were they too much of the same length? Did the sections have interesting differences?
- g. Logical development: was the whole dance easy to follow? Did the idea emerge in a logical way, or were there many sudden changes in content confusing the issue? Did the end really emerge as important with a clear enough build-up, or was it left suspended?
- h. Unity: did the whole become formed and a unified manifestation of the idea? Did the dance appear well constructed, each part having its role to play in forming a relevant, meaningful and artistic whole shape (which may be categorised as binary, or ternary or rondo, etc.)?

4. Consider the style

- a. Was the style selected suitable in expressing the theme?
- b. Was the dance coherent in style?
- c. Is the style relevant in today's dance context?
- d. In the event of the task requiring specific replication of a style, eg, composed in Graham, or in hip-hop style, is there sufficient understanding of and adherence to the details of the specified style?
- e. If the task did not require specific replication of a known style, was there sufficient originality in use of the style or was it a direct copy of a known style without the composer's own 'signature'?
- f. Were the performers able to present the style with sufficient clarity?

5. Consider the performance

- a. Did the dancer's(s') performance enrich or negate the dance composition?
- b. Were the performers sincere and involved in the rendering?
- c. Were the required technical skills mastered to the enhancement of the dance or did technical deficiency ruin the composition?
- d. Did the performer make real the images and movement content according to the composer's wishes or did personal interpretation alter the intention to some degree?
- e. Did the performers dance with a view to a communicative presentation to an audience or were they too involved within themselves, or the group?

- f. Was the style of the dance adhered to throughout its performance?

6. Consider the stimulus as initiation of the dance

- a. Was the stimulus suitable for a dance to emerge from it?
- b. Was it apparent as an origin of the dance or did its relevance become lost?
- c. Was it viewed in a rich artistically imaginative way to stimulate an interesting dance or was it translated too literally or too slightly?

7. Consider the stimulus as accompaniment for dance

- a. If it (eg. pole, cloak, material) was manipulated by the dancer(s) was this done with ease and clarity or did it seem too difficult to manage?
- b. Did the accompanying object cause a lack of movement from the dancer(s)?
- c. Was the accompanying stimulus too large or too much in itself, rendering the dancer as minute and insignificant? (A film moving on the wall behind the dancers, for instance.)
- d. If music was used as accompaniment:
 - i. Did it fit with the dance idea?
 - ii. Was it cut and abused for the purpose of the dance and therefore not valid or appropriate?
 - iii. Did the composer use the phrasing in the music or ignore it?
 - iv. Was the music too powerful or too slight for the dance? (A solo danced to an orchestral symphony, or a large dramatic group dance danced to a piano solo piece, for instance.)
 - v. Was the structure of the music in time suitably employed by the composer? (If a beat or pop piece was used, for instance, it would be unwise to move to every beat, on the other hand, if a piece is in strict 4/4 time it would be inadvisable to swoop, swirl and move continuously through the beat.)
 - vi. Was the music really necessary and an inseparable part of the dance?

8. Consider the other staging elements

- a. Was the decor/lighting relevant to the idea?
- b. Did the decor/lighting enhance the dance or overpower it?
- c. Were the props placed correctly and did they have enough use to merit their presence?

- d. Were the costumes relevant to the idea and the style of the dance?
- e. Could the performers move easily without limitation in the costumes?
- f. Was the make-up an enhancing feature?
- g. Did any of the staging elements detract from the dance itself?

This list of questions, although extensive, is by no means exhaustive. Furthermore, it would be a cold and almost tortuous process to analyse and evaluate a dance by asking all of them. Neither should they be asked all at once. Rather, students might be given short lists of questions to improve their journal writing, audio taping, or, for example, as frames of reference for making judgements on video recordings of their dance composition work at various stages. The questions may help the evaluations throughout the process of composing dances.

Also, the teacher of dance composition would perhaps find the questions a useful toolbox for constructively criticising a student's attempt in composition, but mentioning only the most salient points. Clearly, students of composition could criticise their own, other students' work and professional choreography by such questioning. As Lavender (2009) suggests:

Choreographers need specific tools to address every aspect of dance making from idea construction to 'finishing touch', editing and revising, and they need help in gaining the meta-cognitive skills known to give problem solvers maximum autonomy over their work.

p. 72

Inextricably bound with intellectual reflection on any level is the feeling of pleasure that an aesthetic work of art evokes in an onlooker. Each person experiences this pleasure in varying ways and to different degrees, but – in judging art – it is the fundamental criterion. Above all, therefore, the most important question to ask the viewer and the composer in relation to their own work, is whether or not it was pleasing. Did you like it? If the answer is yes, there is, perhaps, no need for further evaluation, except that it can become a useful learning process to understand why it was appreciated. If the answer is no, then probably, reasons for its 'failure' can be found by asking some of the questions.

Yet, in the professional context, it is known that some choreographers prefer to limit critical evaluation to the subjective feelings evoked by their works, and:

take pains to prevent 'the rational mind', especially 'evaluation' from 'controlling' the creative process. Clearly, hasty and/or too frequent evaluations (especially from third party 'experts') may block the imagination, but evaluation in and of itself is not the problem and is in fact central to creativity. Evaluations must be made to move forward in creative work, and artistic challenges never melt away merely because one wishes to avoid evaluation . . . The point is that no matter how a choreographer works, the need for evaluation (spontaneous, reflective, intuitive or some other kind) is pervasive, for it is through evaluative choices that a work gets built up, shaped and completed.

Lavender (2009), pp 79–80.

Referring to the chart on page 219 it is clear that evaluation takes place from the outset to the final presentation of a dance piece. For the composer, informed by imagination and intuition, knowledge of movement material and ways of constructing or forming a dance, together with acquaintance knowledge of the aesthetic realm, (the four circles) evaluation, therefore, is omnipresent through all the processes involved in composing a dance.

In respect of evaluation of the final outcome – the composition itself – evaluation can only be made in retrospect and, probably, only some time after the completion of the dance. Personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the initial feeling of a composer, who may find that it is necessary to stand back from the actual experience to become more objective.

A last evaluation

In the final analysis, a dance performance succeeds in generating enthusiasm when the audience is aesthetically stirred. It fails if an audience remains unmoved and unresponsive because feelings are left dormant. In discussing the nature of a 'critical audience' Redfern (2003) suggests that this term does not imply finding faults and defects in a work, rather she assumes such an audience would be constructive and engaged in 'an imaginative response' and, moreover, states that:

Aesthetic experience, which I take to be an important part of most, if not all, art appreciation has, as I understand it, a feeling dimension; and part of the educator's task, I believe, is to try to awaken and deepen the perceiver's imaginative and emotional powers as he helps him towards an increase in the number and fineness of his perceptual discriminations. (p. 188)

An understanding of the rules discovered through analytical essay and mastery of the craft of composition and through developing critical awareness in the aesthetic realm, helps towards the production of successful dances. When this understanding is combined with the composer's creative inspiration, born of imagination, intuition, artistry and vision, the dance will probably possess the elusive 'something' which assures successful impact.

Conclusion

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This book has taken a close look at objectives, content, methods and evaluation in dance composition, and strongly suggests that theories, though necessary, are meant to be working statements.

As Dewey (1946) expressed it:

*They are not meant to be ideas frozen into absolute standards
masquerading as eternal truth or programs rigidly adhered to;
rather, theory is to serve as a guide in systematising knowledge . . .*

Theory is practical in that it provides a guide for action. It clarifies and structures the processes of thought. Practice in adherence to a set of guidelines or principles will structure the process of thought that goes with the practical action of making a dance, but it is important to acknowledge that, in art, the guidelines are never fixed. There is no particular set which will predetermine a specific dance, or guarantee a successful outcome. It is certain, however, that the gifted composer, who may claim to work through insight only, has already assimilated the theory behind the practice.

The acquisition of concepts and their application in a discipline such as the art of making dances demand much time and diligent study. Learning is helped if the subject matter is structured from the simple to the complex. This can lead to the development of an ability to compose, but this demands a grasp of the interwoven nature of theory and practice. It is impossible to learn to compose dances by reading alone. With today's technology, much can be added to the written word. Sections 4 and 5 of this book attempt to illustrate how teaching and learning dance will become revolutionised through an integration of visual moving dance resources combined with text – on paper, on screen, or accessed via the internet. In this way, knowledge gained from study or performance of professionally choreographed dance works will put flesh on the bones of theory learned from textbooks such as this and from the students' own practical composition classes.

This relationship between theory and practice can work in both directions, of course. The dance composer, constantly trying to relate theory and practice, faces a maze-like problem. Theory, in a book such as this, can provide clear signposts in a journey of discovery towards making dances that have form and clarity of expression. A consideration of the nature of these signposts and their regulating effect upon the work of the developing composer has been made in this book.

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Technology resources

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Bedford Interactive Productions Ltd. CD-ROM and DVD-ROM resource packs for dance education:

Wild Child CD Resource Pack in collaboration with Ludus Dance, 1999, 2001.

Graham Technique: Analysis of 10 Basic Exercises, 2003.

Motifs for a Solo Dance – improving dance performance 1, 2003.

Choreographic Outcomes – improving dance composition, 2005.

Step Dance – a mini Wild Child Resource Pack for age 7–13, 2007.

Vocalise – improving dance performance 2, 2008.

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